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# MY HEROINE.<sup>c</sup>

*A STORY.*

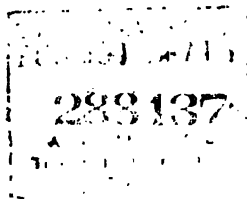
KEEP THIS BOOK CLEAN.  
DO NOT TURN DOWN THE LEAVES.  
IF INJURED, A FINE WILL BE REQUIRED.

"A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,  
And sweet as English air could make her, she."

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### MY HEROINE.

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#### PROLOGUE.

"There is a reaper whose name is Death,  
And with his sickle keen  
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,  
And the flowers that grow between."

WHAT histories some faces tell!  
Others are blank always—blank in  
youth, still more blank in age. You  
wonder what four-walled life the own-  
ers of such faces can have led, that  
they bear no impress of struggle, none  
of anxiety, little of interest, still less  
of intellectual life. The latter is so  
rare, and is met with so seldom, that  
one ceases to look for it in women's  
countenances, generally the most tell-  
tale.

I am a doctor, and am naturally  
brought much into contact with my  
fellow-mortals; and though I see so  
many, some faces puzzle me—nay,  
even haunt me. But to my story.

After a hard day's work I had just  
returned home to a frugal dinner (for  
I am a bachelor, and have not much  
voice in domestic matters, except that  
I hate made-dishes or many dishes of  
any kind), when my servant hurried  
into the room.

"Mrs. ——'s compliments, and will  
you come directly to —— Square?"

It was an unceremonious message,  
and on that account probably not less  
urgent than one of a more civil kind.  
Nevertheless I hesitated; for though I  
don't love much eating, I like to have  
my dinner in peace if possible.

"Find out who is ill," I said,  
briefly.

The answer was as short: "A  
child, sir."

Now, *mammas* are sometimes *exi-  
geantes*; and on a winter's evening I  
am loath to leave my comfortable fire-  
side because Tommy has overeaten  
himself and has the stomach-ache, or  
because that angel, Miss Lucy, has fall-  
en down in a fit of passion and dis-  
figured her pretty face. So I went out  
to the messenger in no good humor.

"What is the matter with the  
child?" I asked.

"Please, sir, I don't know, but  
they say she is very ill, and Mrs. ——  
do take on awful about her."

I snatched my hat, and went out  
without returning to the dining-room.  
It was a dark November evening, and

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as we neared the house, the door was thrown open by some one evidently watching for my arrival. I was instantly ushered up-stairs, and after some preliminary talking, my friend Mr. — came out of the sick-room and spoke to me.

"It's a bad case, I fear," he said, in an undertone; "but I am so accustomed to these children, I hope I am over-anxious."

Our professional conversation it is unnecessary to repeat.

After my friend had done speaking, we entered the room together. On a low nursing-chair, near a cheerful fire, sat a lady young in years, and of a wondrously delicate countenance, which so riveted my attention for a moment, that I scarcely remembered why I had come, and thought not of my child-patient. The firelight, the only light in the room, flashed upon the golden hair, the stooping, attenuated figure, and the pale Madonna face, as the mother bent over something which lay heavy and motionless in her arms. For an instant she raised her eyes and looked into my face. I too was leaning over the child, and then the eyes fixed themselves with the same painful intensity upon that beautiful face—for beautiful it was. A cherub face, perfect in outline, angelic in expression; illness had altered only to beautify; and when the heavy slumber, in which I found the child, changed to feverish restlessness and muttered talking, the blue eyes, with their dark fringes, wandering always and resting never except upon the mother's face, revealed such

unchildlike depths that I knew all hope was over, and that the little one was already speeding fast to its unknown home. Do we not recognize by instinct the children whom parents must not hope to keep? Is not their early inheritance written unerringly upon their spotless brows, speaking emphatically in the too precocious questionings that beam from their radiant eyes?

Conscious that the case before me was hopeless, I turned with added interest to contemplate the face which had first so impressed me. The longer I looked upon it, the more I felt how useless the effort to console would be when the little life was over. The concentrated never-varying gaze spoke such volumes of love, that, if earthly passion could detain a spirit on the confines of eternity, death must have been robbed of its prey.

That the lady already suffered much, I saw; that she was to suffer more, I realized with a pang to which a doctor should, from long habit, be a stranger. I had not seen her look at me again after that one brief survey; but I had nothing to prepare her for. Without raising her eyes from that idolized countenance she said, in clear and icy tones:

"How long?"

The voice was, like her face, vainly, vainly seeking to disguise her deep emotion by a stony, cold, impressive utterance. How could she? Nature had given her such passionate depths, that she might deceive the unobservant, but few could mistake those thrilling tones.

"The darling of thine heart resign,  
 Into His hands with ready will;  
 Else will thy soul with sickness pine,  
 And anguish will torment thee still."

The face had a history. After the child died I learned it. I will try to record it here as nearly as may be in the words in which it was related to me by one who, though only a by-stander, watched the principal actors in this little story with an interest which I hope may be shared by my readers.

## CHAPTER I.

"A bark is launched on Como's lake,  
 A maiden sits afloat;  
 A little sail is loosed to take  
 The night-wind's breath and waft  
 The maiden and her bark away."

It was on a lovely autumn evening that I arrived at — parsonage in — shire, and my host, who was a widower and childless, and had, as he thought, few attractions for visitors in his own home, proposed that we should saunter down into the village before dinner, and so on to the neighboring squire's.

I readily assented, and we went. As we neared the house, an ugly, square-built, ungainly one, but with the dignity which an old house, even if it be ugly, must to a certain extent possess, we perceived two figures pacing up and down on one of the straight old terraces close to the house, evidently engaged in earnest, and, to judge from the attitude of one of them, most interesting conversation.

We were close upon the couple before we were observed, so engrossed

were they; and of all the lovely sights I ever saw, I never wish to behold one more beautiful than the face which glanced up with mingled consternation and relief into mine at that moment.

Geraldine St. Vincent was, at the time I write of, very little past the age of childhood; so little, that I thought then, as I have often thought since, that he must have been a bold man who asked her in the springtide of that very early youth to consecrate a life to him so rich in every promise of beauty and goodness, but so ignorant of its responsibilities, and so utterly unconscious of the evil which forms a prominent part of most men's, and, alas! of some women's, experience. And yet her beauty then was nothing compared to its promise. Her manners, too, would have displeased many: she was the most painfully shy child I ever saw, and withal so full of enthusiasm, so buoyant in spirits, that not even her exceeding timidity could prevent her expressing herself more fearlessly and naturally than was considered becoming to her years.

But before I speak of her character, I must give some idea of her and her companion, as they met my eyes that still sweet evening. Geraldine, tall and fair, and not particularly slight—for my heroine was then more of the Hebe than the angel order—looked positively diminutive and shadowy beside the gigantic proportions of Colonel Trevelyan; her auburn hair, the sunniest I ever remember, her true blue eyes, and her radiant complexion of sixteen summers sank into nothingness

when you looked at a beauty such as I have never seen equalled before or since.

Edmund Trevelyan was then thirty-eight, and had been at twenty-five, every one said, the handsomest man of his day. His gray eyes, shaded by the longest and darkest of black lashes, had in themselves a beauty and a fascination which, if the other features had been less perfect, must still have attracted irresistibly; but—and in this world there must always be a “but”—did I like the expression? No, most emphatically no! Pride and other devil’s vices more degrading had left their mark on that haughty face, to those who could read its lines.

Fifteen years ago I could believe it to have been a lovable as well as a beautiful face; one a mother pure and tender might have loved to look upon, one in which she might have taken a true woman’s unselfish pride. But if Edmund Trevelyan’s mother still lived, and knew one-third of the experiences through which he had passed, her heart must have broken long since and her mother’s pride been turned to shame.

• Cold aristocrat as he now looked, there had been phases in his history which the laborer on his father’s estate would blush to remember—which no English gentleman born and bred as he was should have to look back upon. And this was the man who was to take that pure, trembling child, hardly on girlhood’s threshold, to his corrupted heart.

I knew how it would be the moment I saw them together, for Colonel

Trevelyan was not a suitor to be denied. Women more highborn, more beautiful than Geraldine had broken their hearts for him—had left home, and fame, and happiness, behind them; and some, it was darkly rumored, had broken the tenderest ties of all for his sake.

Colonel Trevelyan was rich and handsome, and, still young, had distinguished himself much in his profession; of his bravery there could not be a doubt. So people shook their heads, and said he had sown his wild oats, and would make an excellent husband—“men of that sort always did.” Mothers flattered him, daughters smiled upon him, and fathers called him a good fellow, and invited him to very good dinners. Still he did not marry. But his fate was sealed now, as well as Geraldine’s.

The St. Vincents were not rich, and Geraldine was the eldest of a large family of daughters, wholly unprovided for. The estate would pass to a distant relation at Mr. St. Vincent’s death; and as he had always lived much above his means, he had nothing but a few hundreds to give these unwelcome daughters. He had longed for a son; for his family was old, and the property had been in it for generations; fate had given him instead nine little girls, whose beauty consoled the mother, but could not soften the disappointment to their father.

It seemed to Mrs. St. Vincent almost too delightful to be true that this beauty should already assert itself—that before Geraldine had made

her *début*, and while she was still learning lessons in the school-room, she should captivate and enslave the heart of the all-popular, much-admired man of fashion, Colonel Trevelyan; and Geraldine was not allowed breathing-time before congratulations were spoken, kisses given and returned, between the future son-in-law and the still young and pretty mother of the *fiancée*. The poor child was fairly entrapped and bewildered; she could not but be flattered at the attentions of such a man as Colonel Trevelyan; she could not but admire his lofty beauty; she could not but think that the interior corresponded with the exterior perfections; and she knew nothing of men—how should she? She had no brothers; she had hardly seen any one except her father and Mr. Austen; certainly had never spoken half a dozen words to a young man in her life; and, compared to her father and the old clergyman, Colonel Trevelyan was young. He had all the indescribable charm and prestige, too, which mixing much with the world is sure to give. He was besides a very manly man, and that always attracts a gentle girl. As I have said before, her decision was not required; it seemed to be taken as a matter of course that she could not say no; and almost before she had realized that Colonel Trevelyan had spoken to her upon a subject she was too childish even to have thought of, it was a settled thing, and she was his betrothed wife.

It was just after this exciting scene, when Colonel Trevelyan, only half-satisfied with Geraldine's answer, was still

pleading his impassioned suit, that we intruded. My old friend and host looked surprised, I thought, and rather annoyed at the aspect of affairs; I was for the moment disconcerted; and Colonel Trevelyan's brows darkened ominously. Geraldine's blushes were very beautiful and becoming; but that was no reason why there should be any spectators but himself. Besides, they were of too distressed a kind to suit his morbid vanity: they spoke of more fear and doubt than they betrayed a dawning love. The man of the world read these signs too truly; but he did not, in consequence, desist from his suit—perhaps it only made him keener, and awoke in his heart some of the long-dead passion of his youth. I cannot tell; I only know he never had failed but once in gaining a woman's love, and he did not mean that a girl of sixteen should teach him that unlearned lesson, and deny him her hand. He had not singled her out from so many for that; he had at first sight admired her beauty and her freshness, but he was not sufficiently in love not to know perfectly well what he was about. He wanted a wife; and now that he was nearing forty was the time to choose one. He would like an heir to his large entailed estates—a son to take a pride in the old name and the old place; but he was afraid to marry. Brave man though he was, he had run the gantlet of too much temptation not to feel that his turn might come, and dishonor blight his home, as he had blighted that of others. Lady Julia Lascelles was beautiful, and he admired her; and he knew a world

or a look from him would make her gladly change her proud name for his; but those dark eyes of hers flashed too much meaning to suit his ideas of a wife. And Miss Howard was twenty-four, and lovely as a dream; still she was not wise or steady enough for Caesar's wife: Colonel Trevelyan had learned that a man has no greater enemy than a foolish, vain, frivolous wife. Geraldine was what he wanted; she was beautiful, and did not know it; and even *he* could not fear that that consciousness, when it did come, would sully the purity of a soul so spotless, or that contact with the world would contaminate her. Perhaps that was what made her so lovely to look upon. I have never seen such an embodiment of purity and innocence as Geraldine St. Vincent. Her secluded life might partly account for it, for she had mixed with no companions but her sisters, and they were all younger and more childish than herself. None of the little girls had ever been at school. Mr. St. Vincent held young ladies' select establishments in abhorrence; and he was too proud to like his children to associate with chance companions. He was also too poor to admit of their seeing friends of their own age at home. Thus it came about that they had led a life very different from that which is the experience of most girls in this nineteenth century—a thoroughly country and simple life, when a school-room picnic was an excitement to look forward to, and if papa consented to join them, they were wild with a glee which going to a pantomime would not inspire in some

young ladies' breasts, who at ten years old have used up all the pleasures which should more legitimately begin at twenty. I don't know that this is a bringing up which fits a girl to become a wife at seventeen. I doubt it; but such was the case: and moreover, as I said before, Geraldine St. Vincent's fate seemed already decided when I met her. So, as I had no voice in it, I could only watch her with the strange interest with which some natures inspire us, even at first sight.

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## CHAPTER II.

"Wife? Saint by her face she should be, with such looks."

THE day following the meeting I have described was Sunday. I walked with my old friend to church; and as he had to go early, I had time to seat myself in the rectory pew, and watch the comers as they took their places in church before the service began.

The St. Vincents made a considerable commotion as they came in. Mrs. St. Vincent rustled in in all the pride of her new character of mamma-in-law to be. She was still a remarkably pretty woman, and the greater care of her Sunday dress and get-up rather heightened her beauty, as at that age dress always does. Geraldine followed; and then some of her younger sisters and their governess took their places, mademoiselle drawing the little girls rather ostentatiously near her, so as to leave a place for Colonel Trevelyan next to his *fiancée*. I do not think Geraldine noticed it, for her fair



head was bowed longer than the others in devotion; and when she raised it, there was an expression very far removed from earth upon her childlike face. It did not leave her when her father and Colonel Trevelyan walked up the aisle, the colonel's stately height and firm military tread contrasting singularly with Mr. St. Vincent's bald head and rather uncertain gait; but she did blush a vivid crimson when he seated himself in the vacant place beside her; and it was not till the solemn tones were almost ended, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and the general confession had wellnigh begun, that the burning color faded from her face. Poor child, perhaps the solemnity of the ties she was about to form dawned upon her in that sacred edifice, listening to our beautiful and soul-stirring service, for a greater gravity settled upon her face; and as the service proceeded, she became so white and still, I was grieved to see the concentration of feeling in one so young. Once only she took courage and glanced at Colonel Trevelyan; and seeing he had no prayer-book, evidently for some time she wondered whether she ought to offer to share hers with him or not. It was not till the psalms for the day had begun that she ventured to do so, and again the same scarlet color dyed her face.

Colonel Trevelyan took the book courteously, and a softer expression came over the hard indifference of his face as he gazed for a moment at the blushing childish one lifted to his. I

could not help thinking then, that had he met Geraldine earlier, his might have been a different and a better life. It was almost impossible to look upon that lofty beauty, and think how utterly it was belied by the qualities of the man; but it was equally impossible to hope that a child of sixteen could regenerate a nature over which nearly thirty years of strong unbridled passions had held their dangerous sway; for even as a boy Edmund Trevelyan's haughty and rather cruel disposition must have caused his mother many a pang. His father died when he was quite an infant, and he had succeeded so early to wealth and all that wealth can give, that he had never known wholesome control. His sister was several years older than himself; and, as he had no brothers, he might be said to have had his own way from a child.

We all assembled in the church porch and walked with the St. Vincents to their carriage. Geraldine, I thought, looked far less pretty than on the previous evening: her rich hair was put back under the homeliest of cottage-bonnets, and her attire was altogether childish and out of keeping with her brilliant destiny. She looked too much like the contemporary and companion of her sisters, and even of the little village-girls, who dropped their best Sunday courtesies to her as they passed.

"Do you take part in Mr. Austen's Sunday-school?" I asked, turning to her, as she stood smilingly acknowledging the greetings of the children.

"Oh yes," she answered eagerly, "I have had a class ever since I was ten

years old; only I could not go to-day — mamma said Colonel Trevelyan might not like me to be away."

Then blushing, and looking as if she hoped he had not heard her, she went on, making things worse, as shy people always do.

"I was so sorry, because we are soon going to London, and there won't be many more Sundays for my school, and I have never missed one when we have been at Oldcourt before."

I was about to condole with her, and to hope she would find similar employment in her new home, when, suddenly darting from my side, she ran after a little girl who was slowly wending her way down the pretty path to the road, crying very quietly.

We followed more leisurely, but I was in time to hear,

"O miss, they say you are going away; and I shall never be good when you're gone, looking at you makes me good, miss; and Mrs. Simpkins said she should speak to mother, and I have never been complained of in church before."

Geraldine, half vexed, half sorry for the child, was gently admonishing her. Her kind "Good-by, Bessie; I will come and see mother and make it all right to-morrow," was interrupted by her mother's rather petulant—

"Really, Geraldine, on Sundays you need not run and hop and skip like a little girl of Minnie's age."

The colonel looked loftily indifferent; but when Geraldine was about to follow her mother into the carriage, he laid a detaining hand on her arm, and said:

"Geraldine, will you not walk with me?—you said you preferred walking to driving always, and I for one should not believe you if you told me you were tired."

Whether it was his first use of her Christian name that startled her, or the tone of authority so novel to her ears, which awoke her to a full sense of her position regarding this man, who had been a stranger to her but a month ago, I know not; but the girl gave one desperate bound into the carriage, then coloring violently, returned as rapidly to the ground, and catching hold of Minnie's hand (who had already agreed to walk home with her father and us), she darted off at a pace with which even the colonel, gigantic though his strides were, found it difficult to keep up.

That girl, I thought, does not know what love means; she fears and admires him, but she does not love him. Will she ever do so? was the question which naturally forced itself on my mind. If he was a good man, and made a devoted and attentive husband, I could not doubt that, with a nature so good and true as Geraldine's, she would end by loving him; not, perhaps, loving him as it would be in her to do some six years hence, when she had arrived at maturity, but loving him as many women do love their husbands—in a dutiful and admiring way, which, though it has in it nothing of passion, is certainly less exacting and often more lasting.

Geraldine could not love unless she esteemed. She had such a capacity for both, that I trembled to think of

the risks she ran, should any one awake that warm heart to its full beatings—to the love it was in her to give.

Had her husband-elect been as noble as he looked, I should have had no fear; but alas, for such a nature to come in familiar contact with a depraved one, the recoil would be fierce and violent, the judgment unreflecting and impulsive, and the condemnation unhesitating. None are so uncharitable as the very young; and Geraldine's life had fostered the natural modesty and purity of her disposition to an almost morbid extent. As I said before, she had lived an isolated life, so far as friends of either sex went; for Mrs. St. Vincent, with the vanity of a silly woman who had married young, disliked her tall girls to be seen by strangers, who might make comments on their still pretty mother, any thing but flattering to her years; and her husband, with the pride of an old and now very poor family, had thought no one in the county good enough for his children to associate with. So the girls had remained with their discontented strict governess, in their secluded school-room life; and, but for Colonel Trevelyan's undisguised admiration of Geraldine, when, walking with their mother, he suddenly encountered the school-room party, her life would have gone on its monotony for at least another year.

I cannot but think it would have been well had it been so. Youth is too precious and too sacred to be parted with lightly and suddenly; and, alas! the parting is forever, when it is a violent and premature one.

Young in years many of us may be, and circumstances may make that youth last a long or a short time; but the youth of the heart is a thing to be cherished—not to be parted with in a moment; for no tears and no sighing ever bring it back to us. I could have wished that Geraldine's had been prolonged beyond the usual period of girlhood; but such was not to be; and He who orders all things with infinite wisdom knows what is best for us, though we often imagine that, had we the disposal of our lives, we should order them very differently, and insure their greater success.

I wonder who, on coming to the end of a long life, would not, were it in their power, remodel all their actions on a totally different plan from the one they have pursued, and with better results, as they think; and no doubt we all make many and grievous mistakes in our lives. Our best intentions are never fulfilled; our noblest aspirations are nipped by the frost of time; but the greatest mistake of all lies in thinking that we could have ordered the result differently. Had we put more trust in God and less in ourselves, we should still review our past lives with regret, though not with remorse; and we should probably have far less reason for the repentance which comes too late.

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### CHAPTER III.

"She was a phantom of delight  
When first she gleamed upon my sight."

THE St. Vincents went to London. Several months were to elapse before

the marriage, which was not to take place till after Geraldine was seventeen, her father said; and her mother found plenty to do in the delightful business of shopping for a bride who was to be rich and a great lady. Her own poverty and her numerous children had prevented her from ever realizing the passion which is supposed to exist in the female mind for dress and spending money; but Colonel Trevelyan—who had unexceptional taste in the mysteries of the toilet, and did not want to introduce a too rustic bride to his fashionable relations and acquaintances—begged his sister, Lady St. Clair, to call and give Mrs. St. Vincent the requisite directions for milliners and mantua-makers; and delicately hinted to Geraldine's mother that he should like to give his intended a check for a thousand pounds with which to buy odds and ends. He had already loaded her with lace and India shawls, besides other costly presents; and the poor child was fairly bewildered by the new importance attached to her, and by all that becoming a wife seemed to entail upon her.

Meantime Colonel Trevelyan could not continue in town after the first few weeks, having arrangements to make for selling out, as he no longer intended to remain in the army; besides which a great many alterations were being carried out under his own eye at Trevelyan, for the comfort and convenience of his future wife. He made but one stipulation in his absence, and that was, that Geraldine should be seen by no one, and go nowhere except to shops and other neces-

sary places with her mother. Against this her father was at first inclined to rebel. He wanted to take his darling, of whom he was not a little proud, to the plays and pantomimes, and insisted that, as she was going to be married, she was quite old enough to dine with them when he had a few friends to dinner; but this the colonel was obstinate about—so obstinate, that Mrs. St. Vincent persuaded her facile husband that Colonel Trevelyan was too good a connection to offend. So Geraldine was condemned to the school-room tea, when any one was invited to dine in Eaton Place; and it is my firm belief she much preferred it to the solemn dinner with her parents; she was still such a child in years, and hers was one of those natures which, slow in reaching maturity, do so abundantly enjoy and make the most of childhood. She would have liked to see a play or a pantomime as much as Minnie; but she was docile by nature, and easily persuaded that her future husband knew best; besides, to a thoroughly country girl there were novelty and excitement enough in being in London, in shopping and driving about, in receiving beautiful presents, and in reading and answering Colonel Trevelyan's letters. Not that he shone in correspondence; she was disappointed in his letters; but hardly would the loyal child admit it even to herself. Although she seemed to have rather rashly and suddenly entered into her engagement, she viewed marriage as a very solemn thing, her tendencies being decidedly religious. She had lived in a frivolous atmosphere so far as her

mother was concerned, and in a careless one as regarded her father; but she had been Mr. Austen's pet pupil, and, like most high-spirited people, was constitutionally reverent and full of veneration for sacred things; and she was grieved and disconcerted that Colonel Trevelyan neither in his letters nor conversation ever alluded to the coming tie between them in other than a worldly spirit—that of so arranging every thing as would best suit the position she was to fill, and consulting her slightly on unimportant matters connected with the house, its alterations and improvements; but he never talked or wrote of their marriage as a serious step, nor made any allusion to it except in the most commonplace manner.

Once when Geraldine's shyness was overcome by her desire to know more of her future husband's feelings upon their engagement, she ventured to put in one of her letters that she trusted God would teach her to be a good wife, and that he, Colonel Trevelyan, would have patience with her youth and inexperience; and she had waited longingly and tremblingly for the answer, which, when it came, made not the slightest allusion to what she had written.

The disappointment was most keenly felt, and weighed upon even her buoyant spirits more than she would have cared to own. It seemed fortunate that on such a day she should have more than usual to occupy both her time and attention, and this was the day fixed upon by Mrs. St. Vincent to call on the artist who was to paint

Geraldine's picture by Colonel Trevelyan's express desire.

Mr. l'Estrange was at home, for he expected his sitter. He was prepared for a good deal of beauty—for he knew the bridegroom-elect pretty intimately, as intimately as men not in his immediate set did, and his hypocritical taste about women was notorious—but Mr. l'Estrange was wholly unprepared for the extreme youth and girlishness of the lady, and at the first introduction thought Mrs. St. Vincent was the future Mrs. Trevelyan. Geraldine loved pictures with her whole heart, and her shyness vanished before those which filled Mr. l'Estrange's studio. She did not say "How beautiful! What exquisite coloring!" etc., etc., as an introduced young lady would have thought it her duty to do; but she was thoroughly in her element, and showed her intense though quiet enjoyment of the first good modern pictures which had come in her way. After the first formalities were over, she sat down opposite the picture which had riveted her on coming into the room, and gave Mr. l'Estrange a good opportunity of studying the childish and intent face which he was to transfer to canvas. He did not think she would be difficult to paint; except, perhaps, to do justice to the coloring, which was, he owned, beautiful and uncommon. Her straight profile—Grecian in its purest type, it would be, he said to himself, when four or five more summers should have passed over her head—was a good subject for an artist's pencil; but when he woke her from her brown study, his rich, melodious

voice, unlike any she had ever heard, breaking in upon the spell his picture had thrown around her, and she turned to answer him, her sunny lips parted, her whole face lighted up by her youth's shy enthusiasm, his task appeared to him a very different one. He almost wished he had not undertaken it: what pencil, what color, could do justice to the radiant sweetness, the soft, girlish grace, the fascination, which had changed her whole face in an instant, and made her so like his ideal of the beguiling maiden in *Excelsior*, that he longed there and then to begin her picture in that character? He need not have so troubled himself. Colonel Trevelyan had seen none of this beauty, he never would—how, then, could he detect its absence in the picture? Even in his younger and better days he was not a man to have done justice to a nature like this; and now he had lost the power to appreciate it. "Be sure your sin will find you out." In all the inspired writings there are no truer words than these. We lose the *sense* of a beauty in God's world which we have scoffed at and scorned.

Mrs. St. Vincent's voice broke the embarrassing silence; for Geraldine was blushing painfully under the intent gaze of the artist; and Mr. l'Estrange was so struck with the charm which he felt it was vain to attempt to render, that his dazzled eyes were endeavoring to make a mental sketch of it.

"My daughter's is not a difficult face," Mrs. St. Vincent was saying; "so I hope you won't require a great

many sittings, Mr. l'Estrange; she is very like what I was at her age, and Mr. — said he had never made so good a likeness from so few sittings.—You remember the picture, Geraldine, in the small library at Oldcourt?" Then turning again to Mr. l'Estrange: "We have so little time at present, that if Colonel Trevelyan had not so much wished it, I think the portrait might just as well have been taken later."

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Half light, half shade  
She stood, a sight to make an old man young."

GERALDINE's first sitting was in the middle of January. She went accompanied by the old English governess who had preceded Mdlle. Leloup in the education of the St. Vincents; for her mother had no artistic turn of mind, and very much preferred the shopping, which seemed rather to fatigue and bewilder the daughter. The girl was at first so shy, that she answered in monosyllables all the remarks Mr. l'Estrange addressed to her. He soon found it necessary for the success of his portrait to make her talk. Her face, so sunny when she was animated, had a very pensive character when in repose, almost melancholy for one so young; but as he conversed upon subjects she had never heard put into words before—subjects which deeply interested her intelligent mind and romantic imagination—she had so far conquered her timidity (for it could hardly be called reserve), that by the time the sitting was over she felt

as if she had known Mr. l'Estrange all her life; and, unlike the solemn courtesy which was all Mrs. St. Vincent vouchsafed on her departure, Geraldine extended a hand which was cordially shaken by the young artist. Mademoiselle's sharp eyes would have reproved this familiarity; but Geraldine's old governess, rather bored by the sitting altogether, thought of nothing but the satisfaction of getting away; and after she had bestowed a formal and old-maidish farewell on Mr. l'Estrange, she congratulated Geraldine on the first sitting being over, and never remarked that the girl's usually animated and childish chatter had entirely ceased, and that the drive home was passed in an ominous reverie, which would have awakened in a more suspicious nature doubts as to the wisdom of these sittings.

As for the young artist, he retouched the sketch he had made of his youthful sitter several times, but apparently with little success; for he at last sat down, and instead of transferring to his canvas the outline he had begun on paper, as was his custom, he sat lost in reflections so profound, and apparently so uncomfortable, that presently with a sigh, which appeared to afford him no relief, he seized his hat and coat, and abandoning all intention of painting that day, sallied forth for a long walk, by which means he hoped, perhaps, to shake off the burden that oppressed him. Whatever it was, I can have no business to meddle with matters so purely private; but as I should like my readers to become acquainted with his ap-

pearance, I must try to describe him as he sat contemplating the sketch he had just made. Mr. l'Estrange had none of the superb beauty that characterized Colonel Trevelyan; his limbs were cast in a much smaller mould; his face was sad and dreamy in its expression, and looked as if it had known both struggle and suffering. It betokened also some delicacy, and an over-sensitive refinement, which perhaps heightened the interest in a face not in the least good-looking. It was, however, redeemed from any charge of effeminacy by the intellectual vigor it indicated; his dreamy eyes and gentle, courteous manner deceived the careless observer at first, but the stern lines which even at twenty-five were visible round that mobile mouth, and the grand development of chin and forehead, would have irresistibly interested and attracted a physiognomist. Mr. l'Estrange's reputation as a painter was European now. Even Colonel Trevelyan's haughtiness bowed before the poor man who was as well born as himself, and he had sued as a great favor for this portrait of his bride. Mr. l'Estrange painted for fame and not for money, and had declined, with very few exceptions, to paint pictures which might have crowded his studio with sitters, but would not have given him the practice or the liberty in the line of art to which he aspired.

"Not the first pretty girl who has entered these rooms and done duty as a model, by a long way," said the young artist to himself, as the next morning he uncovered his favorite

picture, and one which the day before Geraldine's sitting had wholly engrossed him. He contemplated it for a long time, not in the same manner in which he had stared at the sketch of our heroine, but with a critical and practised eye, which seemed to be searching for faults that others would have in vain tried to discover. A wonderfully beautiful face it was; glorious dark eyes, masses of hair black in the shade, flashing into a golden brown where it caught the light, the complexion southern in its coloring and brilliancy, delicate from the great youth it bespoke, and radiant with perfect health and a serene beauty. You wished those parted lips would open and pour forth some of the impassioned utterances you felt should flow from them; you would have liked to kindle in those voluptuous eyes the fire that lurked in their wondrous depths; you felt chilled to the heart when you thought of the shadow which life might bring to that open brow; and you knew that a life for very good or very ill must be the lot of the possessor of that face.

Black with storms the path must be, or bright with sunshine. No medium course was possible for the passionate and essentially earthly nature of that excelling beauty—ardent, impulsive, unchastened, it shone forth from every lineament. A fair heritage for the daughter of a noble house, surrounded by the protection of a wealthy home and kindred love—a crowning grace to the wedded wife of a good husband, and the happy mother of beloved children; but I

could not think that face was a gift for a girl of lowly origin, exposed to all life's coarse temptations. The philanthropist could not in a crowd have passed that face without a murmured "God bless you!"—it could not but draw admiration from the coldest, envy from the vainest, compassion from the kind and true; for the possessor had her bread to earn, and had been induced to sit as a model when a very little child.

She was an orphan, with no home but that of an aunt who had a large family of her own to support, and who could do but little for her only sister's child, Miriam Lisle. You turned with relief from this dazzling portrait to the sketchy outline of Geraldine's features; her beauty had paled by comparison, but it was a loveliness which rested and refreshed you. Its pure angelic type seemed cold and faint, but on it there was no foreboding shadow of sin: suffering there might be—and I shrank as from a martyr's crown when I thought of it—but disgrace and shame never.

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## CHAPTER V.

"O that Raphael's pencil had been mine!  
Then were that smile immortally divine."

MEANTIME the sittings went on, and with much satisfaction to both the painter and his model. The old governess, Miss Osborn, frequently dozed over her book—she was bored by the whole proceeding; and Geraldine was more thoroughly at her ease with Mr. l'Estrange than could have been imagined possible after a six weeks' ac-



quaintance. The picture progressed slowly ; but as neither of their tongues were ever still, it is only to be wondered at that Mr. l'Estrange got as much done as he did. He painted as if he liked his task, and the picture was a success as far as it went. There was something in it which Mrs. St. Vincent said she had never seen in Geraldine's face, but portrait-painters should be more or less poets ; and "we know that poets are a law unto themselves." Only Mr. l'Estrange seemed never satisfied, and the sittings were more numerous than ever, though the picture did not seem nearer completion. Geraldine could only have six sittings more before her marriage ; that being fixed for the first week in March, and Mrs. St. Vincent grudged the time given to them, as it was taken from the more interesting occupation of trying on gowns and bonnets. Geraldine is not shy now ; as she shakes hands with Mr. l'Estrange, her color is coming and going very becomingly, but her eyes have a glad, sparkling light in them ; and, as she removes her bonnet and pushes back the luxuriant hair from that blue-veined forehead, she turns to the young artist with a smile dangerous and bewitching.

"My maid has taken no end of pains, and has been half an hour longer than usual ; so I hope my hair will please you to-day."

He does not look very much displeased ; and, having seen that she is sitting in the position she ought to remember but never does, he begins to work.

"Well, Miss St. Vincent, how do

you like Tennyson's 'Idyls ?' Is Enid still the reigning favorite, or have you come to my view of Elaine ? And what do you say to me for having introduced you to your *beau-ideal* ?"

"Three questions at once is hardly fair, Mr. l'Estrange," Geraldine replied, laughing ; then, growing suddenly grave, she continued, "I shall never like Elaine best, though I admire her very much. She ought not to have allowed Launcelot to see so plainly how she loved him unsought. It is not natural or lifelike, no girl would do so ; at least no girl such as Elaine is described to be."

Geraldine, though she spoke with a quiet conviction which was in itself infinitely charming, showed no consciousness that she was trenching on a subject not often discussed between young men and maidens ; and Arthur l'Estrange, as he listened to her, and marked the pure and noble outline of the still childish face, would have cut out his tongue before he would have said the word which could have raised a painful blush on that fair cheek. Other men might have found something light and witty to say upon the occasion, or have laughed at her enthusiasm ; the artist did neither. He was touched and awed by a nature such as this ; he had never known one like it, and he recognized its transparent truthfulness, and respected its lovely purity. He replied, with a gravity equal to her own :

"You forget the times, I think, Miss St. Vincent. It was an age of chivalry, but also of barbarism, and men and women too were allowed to

be more what Nature made them than this nineteenth century can permit. Besides, Elaine would naturally feel that her love flattered Launcelot, a man so much her senior. Noble and gallant though he was, such love as hers would have done honor to an emperor; and she herself, the darling of her father's and her brother's hearts, who had in her short life been denied nothing, probably thought that to love was to be loved. Even when she finds it vain, she is gentle and womanly still, this 'Elaine the lovable,' when she sings her plaint:

'Sweet is true love, though given in vain, in vain;  
And sweet is death, who puts an end to pain.  
I know not which is sweeter—no, not I:  
Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be.  
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.  
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.'

The voice which repeated these simple lines was like no other speaking voice I have ever heard—it had a timbre which vibrated on your heart for years after it was silent forever—it was like music without the noise.

"They are very lovely lines," Geraldine said, after a pause; "but still I think my heroine was the best, who *lived* for her love, not *died* for it. Enid conquered unjust suspicion, and won back the heart which should have been hers always and forever. She was noblest, surely, Mr. l'Estrange? She was sorely tried too, but never weary of the right."

"That is a true woman's doctrine, and women only, I believe, have the courage to do right for right's sake. At any rate, they bear injustice and oppression much better than men do, and it does not seem to wear out their

love as it would man's. Even to be suspected hurts them less than neglect or indifference, I imagine. Enid nobly forgave and forgot, if she had ever remembered. Yes, certainly women are more forgiving than we are."

"And so they ought to be," Geraldine said, hotly; "men have to be other things which we can never be—brave and noble and self-helpful, as well as helping others."

"Then you think women are never brave, Miss St. Vincent?"

"I know I'm not," she said, laughing; "I am the greatest coward you ever saw."

"In some things you may be a coward, not in all. Painters, you know, flatter themselves that they are to a certain extent physiognomists; and though you may not have great physical courage, I am sure, from your face, you are not deficient in moral."

"Perhaps not—I ought to say, I hope not—but I trust I shall never be tried. I like to lean on others, and have very little confidence in my own judgment."

"It would be strange if at your age you had; you are so untried now, and have all your life before you, and I venture to prophesy that, if any part of it requires unusual fortitude, and that moral courage we were talking of just now, you will not be found wanting—nor in physical either, if it comes to the point. You might recognize in yourself a true heroine, because an unconscious one."

Geraldine sighed, and her bright face was clouded for a moment as she said:

"One looks so different from what one is, and feels so unlike what one ought to feel; and it all seems very mysterious. People talk to me of my candid face, and praise what they would rather die than be themselves; and all the time I am longing to become like them—to hide my real thoughts and feelings, and get a manner of the world, which is the only one, mamma says, one ought to have in London."

"God forbid!" ejaculated Mr. l'Estrange, so fervently that even imper-turbable Miss Osborn looked up from her book, grave rebuke in her face; and at the measured voice in which she said, "I should not think you would paint any better, Mr. l'Estrange, for swearing at your picture," Geraldine's ringing laugh broke forth—a laugh which was the gayest and most infectious I ever heard. The artist caught the infection, and laughed too. The young voices mingling in that happiest of all choruses sounded strangely sweet and blithe.

Have you ever noticed that nothing brings people more together than a joyous fit of laughter?—about something very trifling and foolish, it may be, but the sympathy is irresistible; and you will be more at your ease with a person whose risible faculties respond to your own and are easily awakened, than with a long-tried friend whose sense of the ridiculous is imperfect and undeveloped.

Geraldine was at that happy age, a child still with a woman's prerogatives and privileges; her laugh was the blithest sound I have heard for

years; it had a ring of truth about it—all the prestige of her glorious youth and her happy, innocent life. There was no lurking vein of satire or ill-nature in her merriment. It broke forth like the song of a bird, uncontrollable in its mirth and joy, but as sweet as it was sunny—the saddest heart could not have turned away profaned by such melody.

How parents can listen to such laughter in their innocent children, and condemn them in later life to the living death—the death of all hope and all youth, and all happiness, which a loveless marriage means to a woman—passes my comprehension. If a woman—not a girl in her teens—does this for herself, elects to marry a man she knows she does not love, for the sake of the things of this world, and does it with her eyes open, counting to a certain extent all the cost, she is bound to make the best of it, and to be a good and true wife to the man who has chosen her; but a girl is often talked into a marriage like this by those who ought to prefer to follow her to the grave rather than to the bridal which wrecks all that is loveliest and most holy in a woman's nature. How can mothers advocate such marriages as these, knowing well how much their children are forfeiting, having themselves realized that even with love—pure and constant love—the relation between husband and wife demands great forbearance, gentleness, and humility, on the wife's side; true chivalry, nobleness, and firm affection, on the man's, to make the union a happy one; and, above all,

the bond of a Christian faith, and a looking forward to that better life where change is unknown, where sorrow never enters, over which time has no power.

## CHAPTER VI.

"Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with might,  
Smote the chord of self, that trembling passed in music out of sight."

It is the last sitting: Miss Osborn is ill with a bad cold, and Geraldine is on her way to Mr. l'Estrange's with her mother, who has not been in the studio ten minutes before she recollects an engagement at twelve, and hurries off, promising to return for Geraldine in half an hour. For the first time in their brief acquaintance, the artist and his young sitter are alone; not that they have not frequently forgotten Miss Osborn's presence before this, and conversed as if the world held but them in it, and their world in that cold, uncomfortable studio has been a sweeter and a fairer one to both than either had ever dreamed of. They have not talked of love, or of any thing I could repeat to you, or indeed of any thing profound or particularly interesting—except perhaps to them. Both Mr. l'Estrange and his sitter are exceedingly grave this morning, and the artist worked for nearly an hour in unbroken silence. Geraldine is too pensive now to be like the bright face on the canvas, which Mr. l'Estrange is contemplating with half-shut eyes. His sitter is unconscious that his gaze wanders from

the picture to her; and she starts painfully at the first tone of a voice neither harsh nor discordant to the ear. The question is certainly a peculiar one, and spoken so much on an irresistible impulse of the moment, that as such only can it be forgiven.

"Miss St. Vincent, how do people feel when they are going to be married? Do they ever forget it, or does it strike them with a fresh surprise when they think of it?"

Geraldine lifted her blue eyes to his darker ones, with a gaze bewildered and conscience-struck; the blood rushed in waves over her face, her throat, and dyed even her transparent neck and arms. She tried twice to speak, but no words were audible.

"Forgive me, I am very stupid and inconsiderate. Believe me, I did not mean to pain you;" and the eyes had softened, and were looking into hers with all the winning fascination of which they were capable. Suddenly they lighted into a rare and fitful smile—a smile which grew tender, and then sad, and then faded away. The question was not answered, but another was.

Geraldine had partially recovered her composure, and was feverishly twining her long, taper fingers in and out of each other.

"I am very foolish, I think, this morning; somehow one never likes doing things for the last time, and I have done so many lately—this is my last—" She hesitated; it did not seem right or maidenly to claim his interest in what purely concerned her—

self. But Arthur l'Estrange had risen now, his gaze confronting hers, dreamy no longer, but impassioned and eager. Words rose to his lips which would not be stayed—words which would have been better left unspoken, when the hearer was the promised bride of another; but youth was hot within him, and he was gazing upon what most he loved in life. He knew it now; this girl, with her fair, tender beauty, her innocent girlishness, her fresh enthusiasm, had wound herself round his heart, and he loved her as we love but once in life—better we had never loved at all, if that love be hopeless. She was looking at him as she had never looked on Edmund Trevelyan—love and light in her eyes—shy, but glad. They had both forgotten the existence of all others, when they were startled by a violent ring at the bell; announcing Mrs. St. Vincent's return.

"Geraldine, I have been a long time; you must be sick of waiting for me; but I met Mrs. Dashwood at Madame Elise's, and I thought I should never get away from her, she was so inquisitive—interested, she called it—about you and your prospects."

"Mamma, can I speak to you?" said Geraldine's voice that same evening, after Mrs. St. Vincent had retired for the night.

The room was nearly dark, and the lady rather sleepy; so the voice was a little cross in which she answered:

"Come in, child; what is it? Oh, I suppose you are come to tell me

about the point d'Alençon sleeves; but Victorine and I have settled that matter; she goes the first thing in the morning to insist upon their being given to her, or sent in the evening. I am glad to see that at last, Geraldine, you are taking a little interest in your things, which I have toiled like a slave to get in time."

"It is not about the sleeves, mamma, but about something which I am afraid will make you angry, that I wanted to speak to you."

"Go to bed, child, now, and we will talk in the morning."

"But, mamma, I must speak now—indeed I must; there are so few days before—and I can't—that's to say I don't want to be married so soon. I am so young, and I know so little of Colonel Trevelyan."

The voice, which had begun very faltering, spoke these last sentences with a decision and firmness quite unlike its usual tones.

"Don't want to be married! Are you ill or mad, Geraldine, or both?" screamed Mrs. Vincent, starting up. "Light the candles at once, and let me look at you. Ah! well, you have got a headache, I see. I feared you would, when I had to leave you so long in the studio, which smells of paint and turpentine to such a degree that I wonder I did not faint."

"Mamma, I have no headache, and I'm not ill; and, for once, you must listen to me. I cannot marry Colonel Trevelyan!"

"What, in the name of wonder, I should like to know, Geraldine, makes you dare to speak to me in such a

manner? Have you taken leave of your senses, to suppose that in less than a week from your marriage your father and I would allow you to break it off? You have not seen Colonel Trevelyan for months, and I know he is not a particularly good correspondent; so it can be nothing he has said or done which has put such an insane notion into your head."

"It is just that—it is because I have seen so little of him, and know him really not at all—which makes it quite impossible that I can marry him!"

"Then, in Heaven's name, why did you accept him? You knew just as much then, or less, than you do now; and if you think you can be allowed now to throw him over, you are very much mistaken."

"Papa would—" began Geraldine, falteringly, but was interrupted by her mother, who was very much awake now, and not a little in earnest.

"Your father is so weak about you, I cannot tell what folly he might not be led into; but I forbid you, Geraldine, to speak to him on the subject. Your marriage is, in every way, an exceptional one, and gives me the fullest satisfaction. Colonel Trevelyan is young for his years—handsome, rich, and devoted to you—what more would you have? and what more could any girl in her senses desire? His position is higher than even you, with your inherited beauty, could hope to aspire to."

Mrs. St. Vincent laid a stress on *inherited*, and seemed very much pleased with an exordium which was

longer than Geraldine ever remembered to have heard from her mother on the subject of her marriage, except as regarded her trousseau.

"Mamma, I am very sorry to vex you and make you angry, but I positively cannot marry."

"And I answer, that you can and must! Do you think I am going to be made a laughing-stock to the few acquaintances whom your poor papa's poverty and eccentricities have left me, or a nine-days' wonder to Colonel Trevelyan's fashionable friends and relations, by the mad freak of a girl of seventeen, because, forsooth, she does not know her own mind? Do you imagine for a moment that I will suffer you to blight all your sisters' prospects in life, for a whim which, at the last moment, you choose to take up? I should like to see you go and tell Colonel Trevelyan what you have told me, and hear his answer. Do you know that the man who has done you the honor to ask you to be his wife might have chosen among the loveliest and loftiest in the land? And after things have gone as far as they have, do you think he will submit to be jilted by an ignorant, foolish child like you?"

"It's just that, mamma; it's because I'm ignorant and foolish, and a child, that I am unfit to be his wife."

"Well, then, tell him so yourself, Miss St. Vincent," was the sharp retort; but the mother was quite unprepared for the firm but low reply:

"I will!"

She had counted upon Geraldine's exceeding timidity and girlishness,

and the awe which her future son-in-law inspired in her own vain and silly nature; and as the firelight blazed up suddenly, and flashed full upon the girl's face, she saw an expression of such unusual resolution that for a moment she quailed before it; the next, with the cowardice and the cunning which belong to weak people, she turned upon her daughter with a fury which made her eloquent.

"I dare you to speak to him! If you even attempt it, you shall rue it the longest day you live; You may bid farewell to home, father, mother, sisters—all you have ever cared to love; you shall have no pity and no mercy shown to you; you shall be shut up, while your younger sisters enjoy all the advantages which would have been yours, had you not, of your own free will, elected to marry Colonel Trevelyan; if you don't, I, your mother, will say you are insane, or so deficient in intellect that I cannot bring you out into the world. And so you are, Geraldine; you are mad! Nothing else can excuse you for wishing to disgrace us all."

Geraldine fell on her knees by the bed, terrified into passionate weeping by her mother's unusual excitement. Mrs. St. Vincent was not slow to take her cue—she could cry easily, and that crying never took long to become hysterical, when she had a point to gain; she wept convulsively; and Geraldine, startled into composure by emotion so unwonted, hastened to express her contrition at being the cause of her mother's grief, and loaded her with the caresses which come so easily and

are so lovely from child to parent, while the child is still one in all but the name.

Mrs. St. Vincent began dimly to recognize the nature she had to deal with, and was slow in being pacified; it was long before she would forgive; the fire had burnt low, and the clock had begun to chime the small hours, before peevishly withdrawing her hand from her daughter's encircling clasp, she said, with what she meant to be exceeding dignity and decision:

"Go to bed, Geraldine; in the morning I may perhaps forgive you, though you have almost broken my heart and given me the very worst nervous *accès* I ever remember."

The girl kissed her mother submissively, or rather the tips of the cold fingers, which were all that were vouchsafed her. She was exhausted by the violence of her own feelings, and the great effort she had made to overcome her constitutional shyness, and the reserve which was maintained by all Mrs. St. Vincent's children toward her.

She glided gently from the room; and the elder lady turned upon her pillow, and was soon sound asleep; while the younger one tossed feverishly in her bed in unwonted restlessness until the gray light of morning glinted fitfully into the dreary London room, when she sank into the sound sleep of youth, to dream she stood before the altar with a bridegroom who was not Colonel Trevelyan, but whose face never shaped itself into the one which, alas, for her, now haunted her waking thoughts.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Like some fair bark on surging billows tossed,  
Swift to her fate unknown the eddying tide  
Bears unresisting, now to vision lost,  
Now gleaming white, bends low her yielding  
side."

THE next day was an eventful one. Colonel Trevelyan was expected in London; and Mr. St. Vincent, who had been amusing himself by a few days' shooting with a friend, was also to return to make the last arrangements for the marriage. He arrived at Eaton Place several hours before his future son-in-law. Geraldine and her mother were out when he came, and he proceeded straight to a small room dignified with the name of library, which was reserved as his special sanctum. A formidable and uninteresting-looking pile of letters lay upon the table.

Mr. St. Vincent, at all times averse to business, was about to bestow on them a cursory glance, when the butler, following him into the room, directed his attention to one which lay rather apart from the rest, and said:

"If you please, sir, the gentleman who left that note said he would call in the evening for an answer. If inconvenient to you to see him then, he would wait upon you any day and hour you would please to name."

Mr. St. Vincent was a particularly good-tempered man; but he hated trouble, and felt in no mood just then to answer the most interesting letter in the world.

He was, to use an uncomfortable word, bored at being in London;

bored at having to come back to it when shooting and hunting were at their best; bored, as he had come back, to find his wife and his eldest daughter gone out for the afternoon; and, above all, bored at having to do the civil to Colonel Trevelyan in the evening, when he would particularly have liked to have Geraldine to himself. He was not half sure that he liked the marriage; it would rob him of his favorite child; and he thought Colonel Trevelyan too old and too stern a man for the gentle and yielding nature of the girl who was to be his wife.

Essentially unworldly, and simple-hearted, he was himself unfit to cope with a man of the world like Edmund Trevelyan, and they could have little in common. Wearily, and yawning far more than would have been civil had there been any spectators, he opened the letter which required an answer.

Its first lines caused a gesture of impatient astonishment. He glanced hastily at the signature, with a "Confound it! I don't even know the fellow; but—now I do recollect, to be sure; it's the name of the man who was to do my poor little girl's picture. Can't want to be paid for it before it's finished. Now I remember, I've never even seen it—besides that, it's Trevelyan's affair, not mine. Let's see what the fellow says. It's about my daughter, sure enough; and, by Jove—it's Greek to me—he wants to marry Geraldine!—he, Trevelyan's friend, painting her picture upon the eve of her marriage! The man must be mad!



It's a gentlemanly letter too, straightforward and to the point—perfectly incomprehensible, nevertheless, under the circumstances. Well, though I think my wife has been rather in a hurry to get rid of the dearest little girl that ever lived, if every other man that sees her is to think the same, perhaps it is just as well that her future is already fixed. O dear! if my eight remaining daughters are destined to bewilder me as much as this one has done, life with grown-up children will be any thing but enviable. And I had thought their mother would save me all trouble—one consolation, and about the only one, of having no sons. Well, she'll be in soon, and I must consult her about this letter. Meantime, Trevelyan had better know nothing about it; he's a hot-headed, haughty fellow, and though he regards Mr. l'Estrange as a friend—he has often assured me that in point of birth the artist yields the palm to no man—he might hardly care that Geraldine's name should be ever so slightly mixed up with his. The poor youth must be daft; he had better not take to portrait-painting, if this is to be the result.”

This was Mr. l'Estrange's letter:

“MY DEAR SIR—I can offer no apology for addressing you, as I fear you will consider my conduct so unpardonable, that no excuses I can make will win your forgiveness; but at least I will be open with you, and confess all my crime, if crime it is to love your daughter with my whole heart. You are aware of my intercourse with her, and of the opportuni-

ties we have had of meeting; but I assure you on my honor as a gentleman, that till to-day I had no idea of the nature of my feelings toward Miss St. Vincent, and it was her own guileless nature which betrayed me into an expression of them, which I fear, under the circumstances, ought never to have been entertained or encouraged for a moment. If I alone was the sufferer, I could bear my punishment, and go on my way without further obtruding myself on those who have every reason to think ill of me; but—I say it in all humility, and with a deep sense of my own unworthiness—your daughter loves me, and she does not and never will love Colonel Trevelyan. Accidentally to-day this was revealed to me. O sir, you were once young yourself! Think what it was to see that tender, girlish heart still unwon, and to know that I would peril life and soul to win it.

“Sir, I am a struggling artist, but not a poor one; I make at least two thousand a year by my pictures. I have put by ten thousand pounds, the interest of which is added to the small income my mother has, to make her old age easier and happier; and that I could not call my own, but the sum itself I would settle on my wife. All this seems to you as nothing after the magnificent proposals your daughter has so lately received and entertained from Colonel Trevelyan: but hers is not a nature to prefer riches without love, to comparative poverty with it, if it was so put before her. You will say, she is too young to judge. Be it so. I will wait years if

it pleases you. With so rich a hope, my career may be glorious; work will be sweeter far than it has ever been to me, my life a dream of joy. I do not even ask to see her again, I do not crave from you the least encouragement or indulgence; but if you love your child, stop this marriage, in which her heart is not, and give her time and opportunity to know her own mind. It may be, that in any case I shall be called upon to resign her; she may be wooed and won by nobler hearts than mine, with all the added advantages of wealth and ancient name; her beauty and her lovely innocence may secure for her any fate; but I pray you, let her wait and choose for herself. I think now I could be content to see her happy with a good man; but the utter wreck it must be if she marries Colonel Trevelyan is more than I have fortitude to contemplate. Sir, my lineage is as ancient as his, my name more unsullied; give me a hearing, that is all I ask—tell me even then that you abhor me, and that I must never look on Miss St. Vincent again, but do not allow this marriage to take place. Get out of the engagement on any pretext, and I will forever bless your name, though you may curse that of

“ARTHUR L'ESTRANGE.”

“A wild letter, by Jove, but not an ungentlemanly one,” was Mr. St. Vincent's comment. Weak all his life, he could not be strong now and act on his own conviction—one that had been growing upon him for some time—that Geraldine was not happy, and

that Colonel Trevelyan was not suited to her.

He waited in great perplexity, and with much more impatience than ever, for Mrs. St. Vincent's return. When he showed her the unfortunate letter, her rage, as my readers may imagine, knew no bounds. She was, however, too cunning to pretend to know more than would serve her purpose; and partly by persuasion, partly by a series of persecutions, by no means new to him, Mr. St. Vincent was induced to write the following:

“Mr. St. Vincent presents his compliments to Mr. l'Estrange, and in acknowledging his letter—and the compliment he pays his daughter, he can only express a hope that it may not be followed by any other communication on the subject, as he would, under those circumstances, feel obliged to submit the correspondence to Colonel Trevelyan, who might be disposed to take a less lenient view of the matter than Mr. St. Vincent.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

“The bloom or blight of all men's happiness.”

THE wedding-day came at last—a cold, uncomfortable day in March. The sun tried to struggle out through hopeless clouds, and as the bride and bridegroom returned from church, a drenching down-pour announced that it was in vain, and that the day did not rejoice, whatever others might do. Colonel Trevelyan comported himself with a stern, silent haughtiness befit-

ting the dignity of his position, during the ceremony, and not one bit of the long service was spared to the kneeling couple. Geraldine's face was hidden by her thick veil; but not a sob or tear escaped from her, although her mother and sisters wept audibly, and mademoiselle in true foreign fashion was equally overcome. When the solemn words, "Those whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder," sounded in her ears, a long tremor shook her childish frame; and when for one moment I caught sight of her face, it had a far-away, dreamy look I could not bear to see. The school-children threw flowers in their path as the handsome couple walked slowly to the carriage which stood waiting for them, Colonel Trevelyan's face wearing a smile of triumph and satisfaction, which could not make it tender, though it took off much of its haughtiness; and Geraldine, still dreamy and unconscious, leaning lightly on his arm, not as if it were to be her stay for life, but looking very grave for her. And when her favorite scholars gazed at her with shy admiration depicted on their faces, no answering smile assured them they were recognized, no gleam of welcome lit her eyes as a murmured "God bless you!" passed from lip to lip, and was taken up by many voices, until a deafening cheer as they stepped into the carriage drowned any other demonstrations.

The breakfast passed off as breakfasts usually do on these occasions. The bride was told to appear, and, as she had been told to do other things,

and had obeyed, she did this. She sat at the long table between her father and Colonel Trevelyan in the approved orthodox fashion; but so painful was the expression on her face, that almost all its girlish beauty had faded for the time, so prematurely old and anxious did she look.

I had seen brides nervous, conscious, flurried, tearful. Geraldine was none of these; she was unnaturally quiet, but she looked scared, and the same dreamy, far-away gaze, which I had noticed in church, never left her face. She gave one the impression of being the guest at a wedding, not that this was her own, or could personally interest her much; in short, she was like a sleep-walker, till the parting came. Then she clung for a few seconds to her father in a manner agonizing to witness—no tears, no words—and walked to the carriage, her face wan and white, and set as it might be in death, but as nothing young should ever look in life—all its youth, all its glowing beauty, withered for the time.

"I can't make out this marriage," remarked Lord Lionel Germaine, who had acted as Colonel Trevelyan's best man, conversing with his intimate friend, Mr. Darrell, on the evening of the wedding-day, as they were smoking the pipe of peace over a comfortable fire. "I was told she was a stunner, but I'll be shot if I see it—features good enough; but a man don't want a statue for a wife; and Trevelyan above all men, lucky dog! might have had any one for the asking."

And Lord Lionel heaved a sigh;

for he was not indifferent to the charms of the lofty Lady Julia Lascelles, who had told him, and not so long ago either, that he could not even keep her in gloves.

Mr. Darrell yawned, and replied: "Young, my dear fellow! Give her five years; and if Mrs. St. Vincent here had not been in such a hurry, she might have gone in for the strawberry-leaves, which every woman covets. Mrs. Trevelyan will be an uncommon beauty one of these days, or I am much mistaken."

The subject of these reflections, we find again in her London home, after a month's honeymoon in Paris, which was all Colonel Trevelyan could spare from his parliamentary duties. Still, no one could accuse him of unloverlike indifference, or of a lack of any grace, as he leaned over his young wife on their first evening in their own home, preparatory to leaving her for the House, which then presented fewer attractions than he could ever remember. Geraldine was half-lying on a couch, tired with her long journey, in a listless attitude, which looked less like fatigue than weariness of spirit; and you saw at a glance that she was altered, not physically, except, perhaps, for the better, for she was in great beauty that evening, and her husband's admiration was unchecked by any feeling except the pleasing one that, as time matured her charms, she would be one of the loveliest women in England, where beauty is not rare. Yet there was an alteration; you would have been puzzled to say where

—perhaps her matronly silk gown, which fell in heavy folds round her girlish form, made it look shrunk from its Hebe beauty, or the gleaming jewels which rested on her dazzling neck and arms were so unfamiliar as to look out of place there. I cannot say; there was a change, and one a fond mother would have hardly cared to see upon a bride of only a month's standing—the expression was so constrained, not sad, the eyes so dreamy, and the whole air so listless and unstrung.

"I must be going, love," Colonel Trevelyan said. "Mind you don't sit up for me; not that you look the least tired, my beautiful darling, but that you may do honor to my taste to-morrow, when I imagine you will be besieged by visitors. Don't even take the trouble to open any of these notes. I will show you to-morrow what is to be done with them, and how they can be answered. Go to bed at once, like a darling, and have your beauty's sleep while you can; for precious little you will get of it, once they find out we are in London. Not that I mean to have my little girl turned into a rake at once, and in her first season too."

And the colonel bent down and very tenderly kissed first the forehead and then the lips of his child-wife. Geraldine suffered the caress, but she did not return it—she never did. Her eyes were looking past him all the time with the same dreamy expression they had worn on the day of her marriage. Colonel Trevelyan saw the look, but did not interpret it aright;

he came back hastily when he had reached the door.

"I am sorry to go," he said, with real feeling, "but it is an important night, and I promised I would be there; to-morrow we will do our shopping together early, and you shall tell me if any thing is to be altered in your boudoir, and if you are really satisfied with the house and what has been done to it, after you have seen it by daylight. Nothing can be easier than to make any alteration which strikes you. I wish I had seen to the decorations more myself; but I was so busy before our marriage; I was obliged to be so much at Trevelyan—that I do think will please you."

And again he bent down and kissed her.

"It is all beautiful, only too good for me," Geraldine said, as she half-raised herself from her reclining position; and you started at the sound of the voice, which at seventeen sounded so far away, and had lost all the high blithe notes which I remembered so well. "It is all beautiful," she repeated emphatically, and her face flushed with her earnestness, "and I am so much obliged to you for making such a pretty home for me, and thinking so much of whether I should like it or not."

Colonel Trevelyan bent down again, and this time he kissed her hand; there was the faintest shade of disappointment on his face, which for a moment had lost all haughtiness: it looked tender, almost compassionate, as he gazed on the young fair face lifted to his.

The moment he was gone, Geraldine rose; there was no fatigue or languor in her movements now, as she walked up and down the long drawing-rooms in Grosvenor Square—going to the tables, touching the pretty things on them, sitting down first on one chair, then on another, restlessly pacing up and down again, then with pardonable vanity surveying herself in the long pier-glass which reflected her from head to foot. She paused at last before a life-sized picture of Colonel Trevelyan as a boy of five or six years old. It was an oil-picture, only the head and shoulders, but beautifully painted, with a certain likeness still in the bold, flashing, dark eyes, the dauntless, laughing face—there was the glorious coloring, more delicate in that early youth than it could be now. Geraldine paused before the picture of her husband, and gazed at it attentively for some time; but a by-stander would certainly not have been prepared for the effect it had upon her. Suddenly clasping her hands above her head, she threw herself again upon the cushions she had so lately quitted, and burst into a fit of crying, sad to see at any age, but how sad at hers! Convulsive sobs shook her childish frame, the tears coursed like rain through her taper fingers; but the weeping was not the agony it can become in later years, neither did it sound like that produced by physical fatigue or mental excitement. Geraldine was not the least delicate, she did not know what nerves meant, and never in her short life could she remember giving way to any thing like this before.

Her fair beauty was not improved by the pastime, and it was lucky Colonel Trevelyan was not by to mark the blurred and tear-swollen features which met Geraldine's view as the long glass again reflected a very different face from the one which had flashed back its brilliant beauty upon her one short half-hour ago. Fearing that the servants might perceive the change, Geraldine rang the bell, and hastily ascending the staircase, reached her own luxurious dressing-room ere the gouty old butler and solemn footmen had got half-way up to the drawing-room floor.

"Too beautiful, too good for me!" she murmured to herself, as, the doors all open, she saw the fairy-like vista of boudoir on one side, and bedroom and dressing-room on the other. "If I could only love him!" A choking sensation in her throat warned her of a relapse, and, wisely ringing for her maid, she hastily exchanged her heavy silk gown for a soft, flowing white one, far more suited to her youthful beauty; and not much later, very wearily, like a child as she was, she laid her aching head upon the snowy pillows, and was soon sleeping as peacefully as if no thunder-storm had shaken her young life to its foundation.

Almost as white as its resting-place was the cheek which Colonel Trevelyan, very reverentially for him, touched with his lips several hours later. He stooped down to catch the words which, stirring uneasily, she softly murmured. Their lives might have been different, could he have heard and heeded them: in those early days

even he might have been roused to the hope of winning the love which should have been his, the pure girlish love of that confiding spirit; it might have hallowed the passion which he then felt for his beautiful young wife, and taught him how to love her with a better and more enduring affection. But he started away at the first word; for prayer was little in his thoughts or on his lips.

"God, teach me to love him!" Geraldine murmured remorsefully.

## CHAPTER IX.

"In whose calm depth the beautiful and pure  
Alone are mirrored; which, though shapes of ill  
May hover round its surface, glides in light,  
And takes no shadow from them."

It was a lovely spring morning when Geraldine Trevelyan, again arrayed in bridal white, stood before the long cheval glass in her dressing-room, Colonel Trevelyan on one side, admiring her, Lady St. Clair on the other, more critical in her remarks, but pleased despite herself at the appearance of the *débutante* bride, whom she was to present at the drawing-room that day.

"Why, Geraldine, I don't believe you have once looked at yourself," Colonel Trevelyan was saying. "You must be the first bride of seventeen who, going to her presentation, has so little vanity as not once to consult her looking-glass," he pursued, in a tone of chagrin.

The carriage was announced at this instant, and Geraldine, having gone through the usual process of an impromptu luncheon of sandwiches and

sherry, and a great deal of breathless admiration from a long row of women-servants headed by the housekeeper, stepped into the perfectly-appointed carriage, which waited for her at the door. The impatient horses, new to the occasion, and attracting all eyes, soon bore them to the string, which was to be their destination for nearly an hour.

"The handsomest couple I ever see'd in my life!" passed from lip to lip, as they were constrained to go at a foot-pace through the gaping crowd.

No one could wonder at the admiration or at its fervor. Colonel Trevelyan, always striking and commanding in appearance, was still more so when in full regimentals; and Geraldine had never looked lovelier. Her face was flushed by excitement; its scared and pained expression was gone; and her youth and exquisite complexion triumphed over even the broad daylight, the uncovered shoulders, the marble-white of her heavy satin gown—heavier still from the magnificent old point-lace which is supposed to be the correct thing on such occasions. Diamonds such as are rarely seen except on dowagers old and wrinkled were blazing in her sunny hair, and making still more fair the dazzling whiteness of her neck and arms.

She created a *furor* of admiration as they made their slow progress to the royal presence; and "Who is she?" "Where has she dropped from?" was the continual cry from those who had not the honor of Lady St. Clair's or Colonel Trevelyan's acquaintance.

Geraldine was almost bewildered by the novelty of the scene and by the continual introductions which poured in on all sides. Royalty even condescended to smile at the aspect of one so young and fair: the expression of her face was so unlike the usual beauty-stamp; it was so innocent and calm, and so devoid of consciousness. Her shyness too deserted her, from the interest of the scene and the excitement caused by seeing the Queen of England for the first time in her life.

"Introduce me to your niece, I beg of you, dear Lady St. Clair," said the Duke of Cardros, elbowing his way to them as they emerged from the presence-chamber, not having yet got to the room where they had left Colonel Trevelyan. "You never told me you were going to astonish the London world in this way, when you talked of the young lady you were going to bring out."

"This lady is not my niece, my dear duke; but I am very happy to present you to my sister-in-law, Mrs. Trevelyan."

Lady St. Clair watched with some malice the effect of her words, and was not disappointed. The duke's face fell considerably, and he murmured some expression rather strong for ladies' ears.

Geraldine was now launched in the full swing of a London season. Dinners, balls, concerts, operas, succeeded each other without intermission, and in a manner which to the country-bred girl was fatiguing, and almost too bewildering. She did not dislike it—who at seventeen, with every thing

that money and position can command, is incapable of enjoyment?

Colonel Trevelyan was the fashion: a man whose word was law among the upper ten thousand, and whose success had always been undoubted. Mrs. Trevelyan was beautiful, and it soon became the fashion to say so. Sonnets were written to her; her portrait appeared in the "Book of Beauty;" royalty even talked of her. But by the end of the season Colonel Trevelyan's brief passion was over.

It had always been so. What he had succeeded in winning was soon valueless. Women as lovely as Geraldine had experienced this, to their cost; and those who had lost for him what women most prize had been as little prized as the young wife, who should have been cherished each year with a holier, and tenderer, and better love. He was pleased that she should be admired and fêted, and was still, to a certain extent, proud of her, and interested in her as his wife and the future mother of his children. He could not but respect her; her purity, her guilelessness, and her innate dignity amazed him. She had her own, and held it, from simple goodness, among the false, and worldly, and dissipated of both sexes. Perhaps a nature less angelic would have had more chance of keeping alive some affection in a man like Colonel Trevelyan. At any rate, there would have been excitement, and he must have taken more care. He needed excitement always; he had never done without it for years; and just at this moment he began to be piqued by the coolness of an

old flame—a duchess too, who still lived with her rightful lord, though if half what the world said of her was true, she had years ago given ample cause for employment to the Divorce Court.

Colonel Trevelyan began to think he should like to regain the empire he had forfeited by his marriage. The lady had been very angry. She was a most designing, clever, attractive woman, and she had generally succeeded in keeping her adorers too firmly in her trammels for them to be tempted into matrimony. She had raved, implored, ridiculed, in vain. Colonel Trevelyan had married the unknown girl of seventeen, and moreover the girl was a beauty, and society raved about her.

The duchess saw her tactics at once, and acted upon them. She made herself the friend and indulgent patroness of the unconscious bride. She was apparently so kind and so clever, that Geraldine took to her with the frankness and innocence of her youth, and rejoiced to have made one real friend in that great Babel. Lady St. Clair frightened her; Lady Mildred Daverell was kind, but then she was so strong, and our Geraldine was not feeling well. The duchess acted her part to perfection; she was virtuously repellent to Colonel Trevelyan, sympathizingly affectionate to his wife.

The plot worked, and the victim was even more to be pitied than usual, she lent herself so unconsciously to the snare.

I have no intention of boring my



readers with a detailed account of Geraldine's London season, though it was her first, and was a successful one even for a rich bride and a beauty. She did much as others have done before her—walked in the park in the morning; drove, shopped, paid visits in the afternoon; went to the orthodox teas and breakfasts; dined out on the nights Colonel Trevelyan could spare from the House; and accompanied Lady St. Clair to whatever was worth going to in the way of evenings when her husband could not go with her. During all these months she had only twice caught a glimpse of Mr. l'Estrange; for it is quite astonishing to a novice what a big world London is, and how you may be ages in it and only come across your very dear friend once or twice in the season—of course, I mean, accidental meetings.

Geraldine had dreaded seeing Mr. l'Estrange when she first came to town. She shrank from the ordeal; for although she strove to banish him from her thoughts, she was not always successful, and the musical, vibrating voice would sometimes haunt her dreams as well as her waking moments. She need not have feared; London has so many sets, and the one in which she moved was particularly exclusive. Mr. l'Estrange, though in very good society, did not go everywhere. He might, if he had liked to give himself any trouble about it, for he was very much the rage; but he had never cared a great deal for what is called in the *Morning Post* "fashionable high life," and this year he was working harder than ever at his pic-

tures. Late and early, he gave himself little rest, and still less relaxation. His heart was sore, and life looked blank to him.

I do not mean to say Geraldine had made so deep an impression on him that his future was ruined in consequence, nor that he felt he had nothing left to live for. Probably, had he never seen her again, the dream, though lovely, would have faded. But for the first time his art failed to fill his life; it had hitherto been his mistress, but now it fell cold and dead upon his heart. He said to himself, he should be better when her picture was gone. He read the announcement of her marriage in the papers quite through very slowly, then as leisurely he covered the large canvas with a sheet, and turned her portrait to the wall.

Any one standing by would have thought him seized with sudden illness; for he staggered and sat down, and even his lips were white, as a long quivering sigh was followed by what sounded like a muttered oath. It might have been at his own weakness; for I have told you he was not a strong man, and no manly man can bear to own himself weak, physically weak. Mr. l'Estrange's father had died of consumption, and a baby sister was supposed to have inherited the complaint; but I do not think our friend will—at all events, not yet awhile.

There is stern stuff in him—sterner than you would think, from the refined, delicate, sensitive face. He is every inch a man, and an ambitious one; and he will love his art better and better as years go on, and unfold

to him its inspired secrets. But well would it be for him, and for us all, if we could turn our backs on the dark pages in life's story, and cover them with a spotless sheet, as he had just hidden from view the picture on which he had expended his best energies for nearly two months.

It seems a brief space in which to determine the destinies of two immortal lives; but love's work has been done in shorter time than this, and has wrought weal and woe to men and women; and, moreover, the old story is always new to the hero and heroine of one of these life-dramas.

The first time Geraldine encountered Mr. l'Estrange, she was being whirled rapidly through the park, and was leaning back in her barouche with all its sumptuous, but by no means showy, appointments. She saw some one take off his hat to her, bowed languidly, looked again, and as she recognized the boyishly curly hair, the youthful figure younger than the man, and a subtle grace, more attractive than beauty, in which the artist excelled, a vivid crimson rose for a moment over face and forehead, even to the throat, and left her so marbly white again, that when she reached home her maid remarked the pallor, and feared Mrs. Trevelyan had driven too far, and that she was not careful enough.

"Such young ladies," she remarked to the housekeeper afterward, "always wanted their mother with them or some older married friend to advise them not to overtire themselves; not shop too long, however pleasant, or stand about too much."

There was an heir expected at Trevelyan; and although the event was distant, Geraldine had already been warned by the physicians to be careful. Poor Geraldine, child as she was, who had never hitherto known ache or pain, listened amazed at the rules laid down for her, and declared she could not always drive instead of walk; that she was longing for a race with Minnie; and sometimes, when she was sure of being unobserved, would fly down-stairs at her old head-long pace, the brightest gleams upon her young face, and all its shadow gone—for already there was a shadow there—a shadow at seventeen, which she was to bear through her life. Oh, if I could but make mothers see, that, even if it be every thing that heart or eye can wish, marriage at seventeen is too early! Responsibilities and trials and heart-aches must come; and at that early age are those who have to bear the burden fitted for it? Why is every man to have what is called his "fling;" while a girl is to be settled down in her teens to the duties of a wife and mother? I don't like the girl of the period, and I object to the mildest fastness in women; but I cannot see why they should not have a little fun in their lives as well as men, and be as light-hearted as they may, till they are capable, from some experience of life, to judge for themselves. Then let them go forth to meet its cares and blessings hand-in-hand with a man whose past can bear retrospection, and of whose future his wife and children may be justly proud. It is not given to all men to be great; but

it is in every one's power to be good; and I wish *goodness* were more thought of—more appreciated; in short, that it might become the fashion, as fastness has. Women should begin this fashion, and men would assuredly follow. Women have a great deal to answer for. If their standard is not high, what can they expect of men? And if they ignore the proprieties of life, the so-called stronger sex will do so infinitely more. Let them take up their responsibilities, and meet them—meet them in a womanly, not a manly spirit—they will only do the man's part badly; but the woman's they can do very well, if they take the right view of all that is expected of them; and that is not a little. Courage, self-respect, truthfulness, unselfishness, generosity, are qualities essential to the usefulness of a woman—a woman who has men to help and men to soothe; and I don't think you will find a finer or more heroic combination of qualities in the sex which considers itself so infinitely superior.

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## CHAPTER X.

"When the bright Virgin gives the beauteous days  
Of parting summer a serener blue,  
With golden light enlivened, wide invests  
The happy world."

THE London season came to an end, and it was time to return to Trevelyan. Geraldine was glad; she loved the country with her whole heart, and, having lived in it all her life, had often dreamed of the beauty and the freshness and the sweetness

which denizens in towns must sorely miss through May, June, and July—the first two, if weather is at all propitious, certainly the most enjoyable months we ever see in England. In May there is so much to look forward to besides its own peculiar beauties, and in June the realization has come; and what a realization! I often think nothing can beat it, when roses of every shade and color are in full bloom, and lime-trees scent the air; bees buzzing lazily in the lovely perfumed blossoms, sucking in and reveling in the sweetness; thrushes and blackbirds singing overhead; dragonflies darting across gleaming water, and seeming to coquet with the lilies which in pure and solemn beauty float upon its still surface; and how beautiful are these lilies! Can any thing be lovelier than the large cool flowers, which look so innocent and calm and stately, surrounded by their many-shaded leaves? Yes, June is often very lovely in England. Even Italy and sunny France can hardly be fairer or more enticing than our much-despised island home when it first puts on its summer glory.

But Geraldine saw none of this: it was August before Colonel Trevelyan could leave London; and when he had established his young wife in her beautiful old home, he left her to go to Scotland, where he had been due since the 12th. Nevertheless, I think this was probably the happiest bit of Geraldine's married life. Her father and mother and Minnie came to stay with her; and the latter was so proud of having a married sister, and so

charmed with Trevelyan and its grandeur, that her quaint remarks often provoked the ringing laughter which had echoed so frequently in her old home. Mr. St. Vincent delighted in driving his favorite daughter in her pretty pony-carriage, and in sitting with her under the old trees, whose shade made such a cool and welcome retreat from the blazing sun of those lovely autumn days. Geraldine amused herself by sketching; she was not strong enough for active exercise, and the *dolce far niente* life they led seemed in most enjoyable contrast to the hurry and excitement of the London season. There were enough neighbors to amuse Mrs. St. Vincent, and to prevent her finding existence too monotonous at Trevelyan; and she liked doing the honors of the splendid home, whose young mistress was only too glad to resign them into her hands. Mrs. Trevelyan was to return to London in November by the advice of the doctors. "*Mais l'homme propose, et Dieu dispose*;" and October was barely over when a telegram announced the arrival of his heir to Colonel Trevelyan, and advised him to return instantly. Geraldine's life had hung by a thread for several hours, but all danger was over by the time her husband reached home. He remained with her three weeks, during which time she recovered rapidly; and, again leaving her under the care of her mother, he returned to Scotland to finish his interrupted visit.

Nearly two months later Colonel Trevelyan returned home, bringing some guests with him. He was in

the habit of filling the house at this season of the year; for hunting and shooting were at their best; but Geraldine was hardly equal to the fatigue which a large party entails on the hostess, and so only a few of his intimate friends had been invited.

"L'Estrange has come down with me, Geraldine love," Colonel Trevelyan was saying, with more kindness than was his wont—it was a frosty evening rather late in December—and he added; "He and the other men are walking up; it is such a cold night they said it would warm them; but I thought I should like to see how you were, and whether you would be up to receiving them before dinner or not. And how's the boy, by-the-way? You were rather frightened about him last week, Harrison tells me."

"O Edmund, he *was* so ill, I was terrified; for an hour and a half he did not seem to live; and though Gibbons declares she is satisfied now, I don't think he looks quite the same. I don't indeed," she added, earnestly, seeing the amused, incredulous expression on her husband's face.

He was so good-natured and kind that evening, she told him all the history of the child's attack. He listened, if not with sympathy, at least with attention, and the young mother's heart softened and warmed toward him. She had caught his first hasty sentence but vaguely; it had brought the crimson to her cheek for a moment; but she was absorbed by her baby, had been for a fortnight past thinking of little else, and living in its frail life. Her husband knew

more than one L'Estrange—it might be Lord George; and even if it was the artist, why, it was nearly a year since her marriage; she was very young still, but she felt at least ten years older, and that every thing had changed, herself most of all.

My readers may perhaps think that Arthur l'Estrange ought not to have accepted Colonel Trevelyan's invitation; that knowing well what his feelings had been, it would have been more prudent to refuse; but he was taken by surprise, and had no excuse ready. They met in Edinburgh, and had travelled south together. Colonel Trevelyan pressed him much; he said he wanted to consult him as to where the picture was to hang. He added that Mrs. Trevelyan was rather out of health, and did not take much interest in any thing except the baby; and so Arthur made up his mind that he should hardly see her. He only intended to stay three days—the orthodox visit—there could not be much harm in that. They had met twice in London, had shaken hands, and perhaps exchanged the usual commonplace remarks; and although his heart had throbbed painfully the first time his hand had closed on those slender fingers, the second time he had resented the coldness of her manner and the seeming ease with which she had fallen into the swing of fashionable London life. The way she had exchanged frivolous remarks with more than one young dandy, who was pleased to hover round the rich and beautiful Mrs. Trevelyan, had disgusted him. He hardly recognized the blushing,

enthusiastic girl, and said to himself that he had been in love with an ideal. He forgot, or rather probably he never knew, that Geraldine's parents had both been silent on the subject of his letter and their reply, and that the girl had imagined the past to have been far more of a dream to him than she felt it was to her.

"Lord Devereux, Sir Charles Vaux, Colonel de Tabley, Mr. l'Estrange;" and the four arrivals advanced slowly through the long vista of rooms—morning-room, Italian room, and library—to greet their young hostess, who was seated in the smallest of the rooms, called the small library, and who was still conversing with her husband as they entered. Many people would have thought what a good picture they made, and what a handsome and happy couple they looked.

Colonel Trevelyan was in particularly good humor; he was leaning over the sofa on which Geraldine sat, looking really pleased to have come back to her, and admiring the youthful beauty, which was none the less because her recent illness had given it a rather fragile and pensive appearance. The changing color of not strong health was very becoming, and could not but contrast pleasantly with the powder and rouge he was so often called on to admire; her fair and luxuriant hair, done very simply, and with a little bit of lace—an apology for a cap—covering but not hiding it, also looked really lovely, after the duchess's large and coarse chignon of frizzed dark hair. Our heroine was smiling brightly up in her husband's

face as the visitors drew near, and was only perhaps a little paler when she had gone through the last hand-shaking, having begun with Lord Devereux and ended with Mr. l'Estrange.

"Shall I give you some tea?" she asked the former; but he declined on the plea of being too old to have fallen into that modern innovation. Colonel de Tabley, who was fully as old, but who wished to be thought young, accepted; and Sir Charles Vaux thought it spoiled his dinner.

Geraldine's hand shook a little, and her voice was not so assured, when she turned, at last, to Mr. l'Estrange; but he had gone to a far-off corner of the room, with his host, to admire a Greuze, and did not hear her speak.

"Will you have some tea, L'Estrange? you have been asked five times!" shouted Lord Devereux, with that impromptu exaggeration which rather stupid, good-natured people mistake for humor.

"Thank you very much—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Trevelyan;" and Arthur received his cup of tea from her not very steady hand, and sat down opposite to her.

For the first time since he had been in the room, he looked at his hostess; she was sipping her tea slowly, and her eyes were fixed upon her cup, as if she saw there something interesting; the attitude was pretty and graceful—somehow Geraldine always fell into easy and unstudied poses; then the surroundings were charming and becoming; the square but perfectly-proportioned room, fitted up

with books and pictures, and Limoges enamel gleaming here and there and relieving the dulness of the bookshelves; even the cups and saucers, though not costly, were well chosen, and their pretty and varied colors helped the effect. Geraldine's fairy fingers fitted in and out among them. Mr. l'Estrange watched her and admired; his artist eye pleased with the picture, but hating the gleaming jewels which seemed to weigh down and not enhance the beauty of the hands he had drawn so carefully, and every line of which was so familiar to him, every blue vein so well remembered; for the hands of my heroine had a great charm. I have seen more perfect ones, quite as white, quite as taper, fingers as well-shaped; but I have never seen hands so poetic as hers. Many beautiful hands have a certain sensuousness about them; they are too white, too rose-leaved in the palms and fingers; they look too much as if they could do nothing but display their beauty, or work foolish and costly toys; not the hands which could smooth the pillows of the sick, prop up the weary, rock to rest tired children, soothe the perturbed brains, or, when wanted, write and plan and help others. Geraldine's, though slight and delicate and whiter than snow, resembled herself—pure, true, guileless, lovely to look upon, when folded in her lap, or flashing quick and bright as she played with her child and clapped them, as she hoped he would by-and-by. They were ready to work, if need be; they looked capable, though so small; their touch was

tender and womanly; and though you could have crushed all the fingers in one vigorous clasp, you felt that there was power and sympathy in them.

"I have not seen my godson yet," Lord Devereux was saying, cheerily; "is he asleep now? and is that a sight to be reserved for to-morrow?"

Colonel de Tabley and Sir Charles Vaux devoutly hoped so. They were willing enough to linger by their pretty girlish hostess, who, though a mother, had something of the air of a bride still about her; she was so childish-looking, it was difficult to imagine that she had a child of her own; and youth is ever attractive, particularly to men who are bidding good-by to it forever.

"I will go and find the young squallier, Geraldine, and send him to you, if he is fit to be seen," said Colonel Trevelyan, good-naturedly; then, turning to his guests, "I will join you in the billiard-room in less than ten minutes."

A servant presently appeared to show them the room.

In that well-trained household all was done as it seemed by magic, and to a stranger it might have looked like an enchanted castle, where wealth, luxury, and refinement, must shut out sorrow and sickness, and all the ills that flesh is heir to.

Colonel de Tabley and the baronet disappeared with their quiet and deferential escort; Lord Devereux good-humoredly awaited the arrival of the baby; while Mr. l'Estrange sat on, staring at the fire in one of those rev-

eries so habitual to him, and which those who knew him well never thought of disturbing.

The little heir of Trevelyan soon appeared, covered with Valenciennes lace and half-smothered in Cashmere, borne by a lady of portly dimensions, whose rustling silk gown might have stood of itself, as the maids say. If she had carried England's heir-presumptive, she could not have looked more important, though the babe was a poor, sickly, yellow-looking little thing, far more wizened and ugly than is usual at that age. Lord Devereux, who had stood sponsor to many little heirs, and had flattered many pretty mothers, surveyed it learnedly through his glass, and pronounced it a very fine baby. The nurse made a dignified courtesy, and looked with great disapprobation at the silent figure seated by the fire.

Geraldine, whose whole face had lighted up at the sight of her child, asked meekly if she might hold it; and, having received permission to do so, she sat down trembling with happiness, and, lifting the wee thing to the level of her own beautiful and blooming face, she proceeded to cover it with kisses, and to talk to it in that sweet, crooning voice which seems an instinct with girls and women. At the sound of her voice, Mr. l'Estrange looked up, and saw the Hebe face with its glowing color and golden hair bent down over the little wrinkled, unchildish face of the infant; and, with a muttered expression about dirty boots, which no one heard, he rose and left the room.

Lord Devereux laughed boisterously.

"Poor L'Estrange! the sight of the little man was too much for him! Some men can't bear babies, and say they are frightened of them." Then, making the excuse of a little private conversation with the nurse, he slipped into her willing palm the expected piece of paper which rich and aristocratic godpapas are bound to bestow upon those who rear the infancy of heirs to titles or large entailed estates, and then he too quitted the room.

Geraldine begged to have the baby a little longer, and she was left alone with the child. She was perfectly happy in those rare moments when she was allowed to have it all to herself; she was too young and inexperienced to know that the weird little face, with the shining but inexpressive eyes, was an anxious one to contemplate. The baby never started at any noise, never winced, did not seem caught by the sight of any thing gleaming or bright, as even babies of that age should do—it was a wonderfully quiet child; even the nurse admitted this.

"But then these very young ladies never did have the strongest children; it will get all right," she repeated: she had seen many such cases. But the healthy, happy, bright young woman who was acting as foster-mother to the little heir, knew better; and, as she thought of her own chubby, round, rosy boy, only two weeks older than this poor little fading blossom, she shook her head and sighed, and said to herself gently:

"Heaven help the poor lady! Only think of mine, already too heavy to carry. But, God bless them, they all take after John, and he is such a good husband—one in a thousand, mother says; no wonder the bairns have done well from their birth."

Geraldine much preferred her talks with this homely young mother to the high-flown language and foolish flattery which the grand head-nurse lavished on her and on the poor little sickly baby.

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## CHAPTER XI.

"Let none accuse old England's hospitality;  
Its quantity is but condensed to quality."

GERALDINE and her guests did not meet again till dinner, and then Lord Devereux took in his hostess, and Mr. l'Estrange seated himself on one side of the old clergyman's pretty daughter, who with her mother were the only other ladies present, and devoted himself assiduously throughout the repast to her amusement.

The dinner did not last long. They were a small party, and, thanks to the new fashion *à la Russe*, it need never, even in the country, be a very prolonged affair. The gentlemen did not sit long over their wine, and, as soon as they appeared in the drawing-room, a whist-party was formed. Mr. and Mrs. Ferrars preferred their rubber even to the good dinner which Colonel Trevelyan's *chef* invariably set before those who enjoyed the hospitality of his rich and fastidious master. Lord Devereux and Colonel de Tabley were



the opponents of the rector and his wife; and Colonel Trevelyan immediately challenged Miss Ferrars to play a game of *bésique* with him, calling out to his wife as he sat down:

"Geraldine, if you are not tired, do show Sir Charles and Mr. l'Estrange the pictures; I gave orders for the gallery to be lighted, as Mr. l'Estrange wanted to see the Sir Joshua by lamp-light as well as by day. We think of lighting your portrait by the same plan, if he approves."

Geraldine rose at once, and the two gentlemen followed her. The collection was an admirable one of old masters; not so much the fashion now as modern pictures, but how beautiful when really good and well chosen! There were some very fine family portraits, one by Sir Peter Lely; a Gainsborough, which was indeed magnificent—Lady Helena Trevelyan, haughty but bewitching, young as the present mistress of that princely home, and quite as lovely—lovelier many would have thought; for the full, dark eyes, the soft, rich, nearly black hair, was in such radiant contrast with the fair and peach-like bloom and the voluptuous coral lips. Her husband, Sir Philip Trevelyan, also a life-sized portrait, hung beside her; a very bad man they said he had been, and he looked it; but he had beauty also, and you no longer wondered that Colonel Trevelyan was so handsome.

Both grandfather and grandmother had been renowned for their looks, and, if report spoke truly, for other things besides. The radiant lady with the laughing eyes had died in a mad-

house, her heart broken and her reason fled, through the misconduct of the husband she had idolized.

There were exquisite landscapes of Italy and France, and great German battle-plain, on which Colonel Trevelyan's ancestors had fought gallantly, and died as brave men die. Then they arrived at the Sir Joshua. It also was a portrait of a Trevelyan—a little girl stepping over a brook, with a lovely background, such as only Sir Joshua could paint; her naked feet, beautiful as the feet of children are, and her sweet, eager face delighting with childish glee in her escapade. Mr. l'Estrange stood in rapt delight before it. Sir Charles, after a cursory examination, proceeded leisurely to criticise every picture in the gallery; and having done this, and exchanged a few *banalités* with his hostess, but faintly responded to—for Geraldine loved pictures, and could never talk much when she was looking at them—he wended his way back to the drawing-room, and, while the *whist* and *bésique* proceeded, began by reading the paper, and ended in a sound sleep.

Geraldine and Mr. l'Estrange were some time before they perceived that they were alone: he woke up from a brown study in which he had lost himself over the Sir Joshua, and she also was absorbed.

"Can you tell me the history of this little lady?" he asked of his young cicerone.

"I hardly know," answered Geraldine, rather nervously. "I believe she was a great-aunt of Colonel Trevelyan's. He always says she is not nearly so

beautiful as his grandmother and his great-grandmother were; but I think it's a very sweet face, with a great deal of charm, though she looks so full of fun just at the moment when she is accomplishing her prank, and is half-way across the stepping-stones; there is a touching look in the dark eyes."

"Yes, there is a lurking melancholy in them," Mr. l'Estrange answered—"something pleading and pathetic, in curious contrast to the arch fun which is dimpling the childish mouth."

"There are some lines written about her, if you would care to see them—the housekeeper gave them to me, having found them in an old cabinet in the oriel room; they are curious from being more than a hundred years old; but I should not care to have them written of any one I love, they are so full of malice, even when they praise, and I can't bear the allusion to the curse; it seems so dreadful to wish ill to a child;" and Mrs. Trevelyan shuddered.

The young artist took the paper from her hand, and read with some difficulty these lines—wretched as to rhythm and poetry, but with something weird and sorrowful exceedingly in their hidden meaning:

"Scion of a haughty race,  
Well I know thy matchless face  
All prophetic is of doom  
Far more awful than the tomb:  
Wedded never shalt thou be,  
Children ne'er shall climb thy knee;  
For the curse it worketh yet,  
And its youngest spareth not.  
Think not to elude thy fate;  
Come it now or come it late,  
All who bear thy hated name  
Feel its sting and taste its shame;  
As the brook thou steppest o'er,  
So it lives for evermore."

Mr. l'Estrange returned them without comment; and a silence followed, which was unbroken until Colonel Trevelyan's loud and rather harsh voice reached them.

"Geraldine, Mrs. Ferrars is come to say good-night—and the fire is out—and Vaux is asleep. Such a run of ill-luck too as I have had—but some day, Miss Alice, you'll give me my revenge."

He was, as I have said, in unwonted good-humor, and he put his hand on Geraldine's head and smoothed her hair, as he added:

"Tired, my little woman, I think.—Has she done cicerone well, L'Estrange? She ought by this time to know every picture by heart; for she spends all the days she can't go out in walking up and down here looking at them. I believe she likes them better than I do, although I have lived with them all my life."

Geraldine shook hands warmly with Mr. and Mrs. Ferrars and Alice, and was following them to find the wraps, which had been brought into the drawing-room, for the night was a chilly one, when Colonel Trevelyan put his arm round her, and said:

"Go to bed now, there's a good child; you look tired, and Mrs. Ferrars will excuse you.—She is still rather of an invalid, this little wife of mine."

They looked well as they stood thus together, their beauty such a contrast, and in both so great. It had really a very artistic effect, but the artist had not waited to see it. Geraldine put out her hand to wish him

good-night, after she had taken a second leave of the Ferrarses, but he was gone.

And now my readers will have discovered that it would have been wiser for him to have taken his departure altogether. He had over-estimated his strength, and had believed himself invulnerable, when really he was very much the reverse. He could not bear to see the handsome colonel's hand resting upon those slight shoulders, or smoothing the waving tresses; the air of patronage and good-natured superiority in the husband to the wife galled him. He was a good man—a man very proud, very sensitive, very tender; and such men are always chivalrous to women. He had not outlived, or for himself destroyed—as so many, alas! do—the belief in a true pure woman. He believed Geraldine to be this; and had he won her for his wife, she would have been revered as well as beloved. He could not have made a plaything of her; and his affection, though it might have been read in eye and lip and voice, would have been deep as well as true—respectfully tender, as I think all men's love should be, when bestowed on a worthy object.

The man of whom I write had such a large heart, such a capacity for loving, and for loving purely and nobly, that the more I saw of him the more I regretted that he and Geraldine should not have cast in their lot together, and fought life's battle side by side. But then, for one man who marries his ideal, "his queen"—as some one has

so enchantingly written\*—how many there are who go through life either unwedded, or married to those who suit them about as little as it would suit a thorough-bred horse to draw a wagon, or as Italian villas suit our cold and ungenial climate! My own opinion is, that if men like Arthur l'Estrange cannot marry the right person, they had better not marry at all. The chances are, that they don't; their extra-sensitiveness, and the depth and tenacity of purpose and feeling which belong to these characters, unfit them for roughing it in the world. They love often not wisely, but always too well; and the halo which surrounds the beloved object is too sacred a thing to be lightly displaced. They do not, either, often love unworthily or beneath them—their great insight into character and quick receptive powers prevent that. They have an instinct of goodness, which is almost heaven-born; and though mere physical beauty may allure them for a time, it will never wholly captivate, unless it be allied to that beauty of

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\* "I will not dream of her, tall and stately—  
 She that I love may be fairy light;  
 I will not say she must walk sedately—  
 Whatever she does will be sure to be right.  
 She may be humble or proud, my lady,  
 Or that sweet calm that is just between;  
 But whenever she comes, she will find me ready  
 To do her homage—my queen, my queen!"

"But she must be courteous, she must be holy,  
 Pure in her spirit, this maiden I love:  
 Whether her birth be noble or lowly,  
 I care no more than the spirits above.  
 But I'll give my heart to my lady's keeping,  
 And ever her strength on my own shall lean;  
 And the stars may fall, and the angels be weeping,  
 Ere I cease to love her—my queen, my queen!"

character, that heart-goodness, which is so beautifully described in the Proverbs of Solomon: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life."

Yes, it would have been wiser and better for Arthur l'Estrange to have gone. "Discretion" is certainly "the better part of valor" in these cases. Nevertheless, reader, he lingered on, meaning no harm. So, many of us do not mean any harm; yet harm comes, alas, so easily—harm so irremediable that nothing can ever put it right—nothing ever give back the peace so easily destroyed. Thoughts of evil were far from these two. He was a good man, a remarkably good man, when you take into account all the temptations which assail a man of the world. He had worked hard all his life, and in that lies great safety. He had a good mother, and a judicious one. She had idolized him, but had idolized him wisely, and developed, according to her fine feminine instincts and her sweet mother's love, the rare and gifted nature of her son. She had encouraged his enthusiasm, and respected his poetic nature, though it was foreign to her own. She did not understand it, but she had done what only a woman can—she had *believed* in it. Her own life had been one long trust in and love to God. Disciplined when still young by a great sorrow, she had acquired much self-control; but she did not expect or wish that what only time and experience can teach should

be intuitive in the child. She early planted practical religious lessons in his heart; and as he grew up, she admitted him to some of the secrets of her own chastened and lonely life, and also to the only comfort which such lives can know.

If sorrow has been well borne, it has taught deeper and holier lessons than any philosophy can teach, and to each soul it speaks a language that soul can best understand. Arthur felt that his mother had suffered, and he loved her the more for it; but the atmosphere of his home had always been made sunny by her right-mindedness and affection. He began very early to reverence and appreciate a good woman. He ran the gantlet of his school-life and his foreign travels, protected still by the happy influences of his pure home. Then came long and hard study. He grew absorbed in art, and, much as I like him, I cannot say that he avoided all the malpractices of artists. He did not respect Sunday as he had done when a boy; often he did not even go to church once on that holy day. If he was in the country, he would do so; but in London he too often invited friends, who spent the day in his studio, smoking, and discussing pictures. Thus the mornings slipped rapidly away; the afternoons and evenings were generally devoted to long walks, which those who lead sedentary lives so much require. I am not going to tell you that he was immaculate; but the grosser sins which mar so many men's lives had few, if any, attractions for him.

It is the third day of Arthur l'Estrange's visit, and, as I said before, it is quite time he went. He and his hostess meet seldom, and converse less; but he certainly does not find his host improve on a nearer acquaintance, and he is learning to listen, all too eagerly, to the soft tones of the voice which should have been so young, and yet has lost its ring—to watch, all too narrowly, the changing color and fleeting smiles of the sweet, no longer unclouded face; and her bright flashes of wit and wisdom are too dear to him. The other men listen, and are amused; for Geraldine's great charm is in her originality; and though she is so shy, her fun breaks bounds at times, and makes her expansive and bewitching.

To Arthur l'Estrange her society is becoming dangerously dear. Her every word interests him only too much, and he feels now that she is one of those women whose beauty is her least attraction, and that under happier auspices she might ripen into a character full of steadfast purpose, high resolve, and holy endeavor.

I do not say she was by any means faultless. Though apparently so gentle, she resented unkindness or injustice very keenly, and her timidity, if encouraged, might lead her to the verge of cowardice, and if vanquished, except from the highest motives, into great errors. He knows she will have struggles and difficulties with herself; he sees that her surroundings are all against her; and that she has no one to guide her, no one she can turn to. When a man begins to take this interest in a woman—to think that he can

help her, and to long to do so; to feel that the least demonstrative sympathy is better than none at all, and that to have one person in the world who can understand and appreciate her saves a woman from herself and from the isolated life which a loveless marriage must more or less entail upon her—he treads on dangerous ground.

## CHAPTER XII.

"A creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food;  
For transient sorrows, simple wiles  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

It all came about in this wise: Arthur l'Estrange had made up his mind, while he was dressing, that this third day of his stay should also be his last at Trevelyan. He promised to shoot in the afternoon, but would leave before dinner. He was late in coming down, and the whole party were assembled at breakfast when he entered. His host looked moody, the guests rather constrained, and Geraldine had tears in her eyes when she shook hands with him. Probably no one else saw them; but he was getting too much accustomed to study that April face not to perceive immediately that something had disturbed its serenity. He inquired after the baby, and Geraldine gently answered that he was quite well; then she rallied, and resumed a gay and laughing discussion with Lord Devereux, who, always kind and courteous with women, was particularly so to his girlish hostess.

"You have no right to call me a radical because I should like to see

the poor better off. I fear all cannot share alike; but still I see that we have too much, and they have too little."

"I entirely agree with you there, and it is a great pity that more ladies in your position do not see things in the same light. You can help your poorer neighbors much better than we clumsy men can. You give them sympathy, as well as more substantial comfort; and, depend upon it, the poor care for that, whatever morose people may say to the contrary."

"And yet several of my friends tell me that private charity in London is doing a great deal of harm—that it destroys self-reliance and the proper feeling of independence and self-respect which every Englishman is supposed to have, or should have."

"It must be done upon a system, and not be only spasmodic; also, it should not expect too much; and, above all, let it begin in the right direction. To help beggars in the streets is positively immoral; but the hard-working, respectable poor have often a fearful struggle for bare existence, especially in towns; and I look upon it as the duty of those who are more fortunate than themselves to befriend them. I would not recommend any one so young as you are to go about among them; it would not answer, and you would run the risk of perpetual imposition; but if you happen to know of any respectable person who would visit for you, I think you would be doing a wise and a kind action to employ her."

"O, Miss Osborn, my old governess,

would be just the thing, would she not, Mr. l'Estrange?" Geraldine answered, eagerly.

It seemed so natural to appeal to him, and yet she blushed painfully when she recollected those sittings in the studio.

Sir Charles Vaux, who had appeared quite engrossed by some *pâté de foie gras* in which he was indulging, and had hardly spoken since he began an elaborate breakfast, here broke in:

"I think the poor are a great bore, and we hear far too much of them nowadays."

Geraldine's happy, ringing laugh interrupted him, and he stopped with his mouth full to stare at her; for he had meant what he said in sober earnest, and had no idea how ridiculous he looked, with an array of plates before him which had held almost every comestible you can eat in the morning, from mutton-chops to devilled kidneys; and, as he gravely began upon his last course of hot buttered rolls and marmalade, Lord Devereux said:

"Now, what would you have done, Vaux, had it pleased Providence that you should be poor, as it has that pious William should be successful?"

"I am sure I don't know," the baronet languidly answered, glancing meanwhile at his faultless get-up and at the lily of the valley which adorned his button-hole, and put the finishing touch to the perfection of his hunting-attire. "Not that I am rich. It's all very well for you and Mrs. Trevelyan, with your rent-rolls and your landed estates, to talk of charity and of redressing the wrongs of the poor; but

how's a man with only a little money in the Funds, and belonging to the most expensive regiment in England, to have any thing to spend except upon himself?"

It was so notorious that Sir Charles Vaux did not spend a sixpence upon any one but himself, and that, besides being a very rich man, he was the greatest screw in England, that Colonel de Tabley said cynically:

"Come, Vaux, my good fellow, even Devereux can't give you the compassion he was wasting just now on the working poor of London."

"I wish you would not talk like that," Geraldine said earnestly. "When was compassion ever wasted, especially upon these people, who are so much more brave, more self-denying, and more patient, than we are? I know something of the poor, for mamma always intrusted them to me at Old-court; and I do assure you that you can have no idea how heroically and uncomplainingly they bear their troubles, and how grateful they are for very small kindnesses. They make so much less of their difficulties than we do—they accept them; perhaps they talk of them a good deal more than we should; but, at any rate, they face them with courage and a marvellous endurance; and they don't live an unreal life, as we do: that is what I hate and despise. I can't help seeing it; every thing with us is so unreal. We say what we don't think, and we think—" She paused, for her husband was looking very black—whether at her or at his letters she could not imagine.

"What we don't say. Perhaps that's just as well, sometimes," said Lord Devereux, good-naturedly coming to her rescue.

But Colonel de Tabley, who was clever despite his indolence, was charmed by the brightness of Geraldine's manner, and by the eager, lovely, tell-tale face which was turned to him. He had never seen her so excited before.

"We think what, Mrs. Trevelyan? We don't all think of other people as you do. I am afraid we are too apt to forget them and their troubles. But why do you say our lives are so unreal? They are not as unreal as are those of the French, surely? though perhaps we are less in earnest than the Germans—at all events, than they have proved themselves lately."

"Oh, it's not that. I dare say, as a nation, we are not unreal; but what is called society is unreal. The last thing in the world people ever are is to be themselves; and sometimes I am afraid it may be catching, and that soon no one will dare to be true, or kind, or unselfish."

Arthur l'Estrange was sitting next to her, and his low "*You will never be afraid, that I can answer for,*" was unheard by any but herself; for Lord Devereux, in his cheery, noisy voice, replied:

"Well, when you are going to establish Mrs. Goodman here in your place, let me know; for, although she is a nice, pretty young woman enough, with very good manners, and might not do so very badly either, perhaps John, to whom she introduced me the

other day at the lodge-gate, and whom she seems to think a paragon of perfection, would hardly look so well at Trevelyan as its present master."

"I want to speak to you, Geraldine, when you have finished your breakfast," interrupted Colonel Trevelyan, rather rudely; and he strode out of the room, collecting a heap of papers and letters in which he had seemed immersed.

His young wife prattled on gayly, though the tell-tale color mounted to her cheek; but it was only when she had poured out Arthur's second cup of tea and seen to all his wants, that she obeyed her husband's mandate.

"Too bad, I must say, of Trevelyan," exclaimed Colonel de Tabley, as soon as the door had closed on their hostess. "What on earth he wants with that old hag here I cannot possibly imagine." But a warning glance from Lord Devereux checked his further speech, and Sir Charles Vaux's astonished glances rested first on one and then on the other of the men, but met with no explanation.

Meantime Geraldine had repaired to her husband's study: a name given more in derision could hardly be imagined, inasmuch as, although Colonel Trevelyan was not by any means wanting in ability, he had never studied in his life. This room was, however, his *sanctum*, decorated with some beautiful old armor, spoiled by some hideous prints of prize-fighting and prize-fighters, and littered with boxing-gloves, foils, etc. Here, in this room, the unfortunate steward was sent for to be sworn at, the luckless game-

keepers received many a jobation, and into it was shown any ill-advised villager who came to Colonel Trevelyan with his grievances, and who was pretty sure to register a mental vow that it should be the last time he ventured into the lion's den. Hither our heroine repaired to receive her husband's orders—her heart beating fast, her manner dignified and calm, though slightly embarrassed, for the morning's storm was a mystery to her.

"I tell you what it is, Geraldine; I will have no nonsense. The duchess has been accustomed to consider Trevelyan as a sort of second home whenever her husband can spare her from his sick-room. She has always proposed herself in this manner, and named her own day. You will please to order the oriel room to be got ready for her, and to receive her courteously as my guest; that is all you will be expected to do. She is going to bring her own horses, and will probably hunt three days a week; so she will not be the least in your way—in fact, she so much prefers men's society and pursuits to women's, that you will probably see little of her; and at any rate, whether you like it or not, I am going to be master in my own house, and the sooner you learn that the better."

"Indeed, Edmund, you misunderstand me. I was only surprised," our heroine answered gently, though there was a flash in her blue eyes which should have warned Colonel Trevelyan that he had gone too far. "You told me in one of your letters last week, that we were to go to London the be-



ginning of January, and as to the men, they all leave to-morrow morning—they told me so—except Mr. l'Estrange, who goes this evening."

"Goes this evening, does he? That won't do; the duchess particularly wants to meet him. She says he is a genius and a lion, and all that sort of rubbish, and that she has always wanted him for her parties, but he is *difficile*, it seems, and goes out little. I'll ask him to stay;" and the Colonel strode to the door, and returned after a few minutes, in no good humor, having been unsuccessful in his mission. "Curse the fellow!" he muttered; "he's a stuck-up prig. Much obliged, but would not; and so on. I say, you ask him, Geraldine; no man likes to refuse a lady, and a pretty one too."

The last sentence was said sneeringly, though it was meant as a sort of *amende*, and he was quite unprepared for Geraldine's reply. The color flushed into her face, but she answered quietly,

"I would rather not."

"You would rather not, would you! It seems, madam, you would rather do nothing to oblige me; but suppose I insist upon your doing what I suggest; suppose I let you know that you are bound, as my wife, to carry out my will and pleasure in every thing? Don't stand there looking like an idiot, but go at once as I bid you, and ask the man to stay!"

It was the first time Geraldine had suffered from her husband's violent temper. She had heard him swear at the servants, and had been a witness to one or two terrific outbursts with the courier, even in their short honey-

moon; but he had always been courteous and kind to her—for the first few months so exceedingly so, that the terrified household hoped their sweet young mistress had brought some spell to bear upon her haughty and arrogant lord. But her remark, though innocent enough, about the arrival of the duchess, had stung him,—made too before these men of the world, who most likely guessed at his thralldom. It had really only been, that she hoped she was not coming; but it had been enough to provoke a cold and cutting retort from Colonel Trevelyan; and Geraldine was so little used to harsh words, that the tears had started to her eyes, and though the other men had not remarked them, they were quite apparent to the artist.

Deeply wounded, Geraldine left her husband's room, and went in search of Mr. l'Estrange. She was too proud to show any emotion now; and it is no doubt easier to get over a feeling of anger with a person you do not heartily love than with one you do. Still, she was much hurt and disconcerted; had she been older, she would have felt it was wiser to try and recover her composure before she went on her errand; instead of which, she acted on the impulse of the moment, and at once sought the artist. He was in the library writing a letter, and Geraldine's soft footfall was unheard until she stood close beside him.

Very coldly—almost haughtily for her—she said: "Mr. l'Estrange, will you oblige me, and stay with us a little longer? Colonel Trevelyan has sent me to ask you."

"You are very good, I'm sure," began Arthur, rising hastily. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure; but I really am due in town some time this week. I have had a long holiday, and idleness is never good for me—I mean for those who have their bread to earn," he added, seeing her look surprised.

"Then I am to tell him you can't?" she said, still very coldly.

"Him!" repeated Arthur, absently.

"Edmund," said Geraldine, "my husband."

Arthur's voice was colder than her own as he replied:

"I should be obliged if you would explain to Colonel Trevelyan that I think I have been long enough away from my work."

The pain about his heart which came with those words from her lips, "Edmund, my husband," had warned Arthur that it was time for him to go—they nerved him to the effort even of refusing her. She was leaving the room, when something in her listless attitude struck him, and he followed her, fearing that he had been uncourteous.

"I have not half thanked you and Colonel Trevelyan for your kindness during my visit, nor, indeed, for the flattering wish that I should prolong my stay; but, believe me, I am grateful, and extremely sorry to be obliged to refuse."

"You look it," she said, almost bitterly, but with an attempt to laugh, which died away into a sort of sob.

Arthur l'Estrange looked at her sadly enough now. She was so differ-

ent from the frank, bright girl he had painted but little more than a year ago.

"I am sorry," he said, "whatever I may look. But you, Mrs. Trevelyan, look very tired; and if I might suggest it, you ought to take more care of yourself, and rest a little."

"No, thank you, I am going to try a walk in the garden, for I have a headache;" and so saying, she left the room.

Her face haunted Arthur l'Estrange all through the day—he saw it wherever he went; and even his host's first-rate shooting failed to chase away the remembrance. He came home earlier than the others; and before he went to his room to pack up his things, he turned into the picture-gallery, to finish a sketch he had been making of the picture by Sir Joshua. Mrs. Trevelyan was pacing up and down with the baby in her arms. Arthur apologized for the intrusion, and went up to look at the child. Its beautiful brown eyes—the only beauty it possessed—were wide open, and looked more vague than ever, and on its poor little wizened face something bright and sparkling shone. What could it be? Arthur glanced at the young mother and was enlightened—a tear had fallen on the infant's face.

"Are you rested?" he asked, kindly. "It was such a lovely morning, I hoped it would do your headache good."

Poor Geraldine's voice had tears in it, but she answered his question by another.

"Do you think he looks so very delicate? Mrs. Latouche called to-

day, and asked me if he was; and then she seemed surprised that he did not take more notice, when she heard how old he was."

Mr. l'Estrange could hardly forbear smiling.

"I am afraid I am no great judge of babies; he has very good eyes. I have never seen them open before."

Geraldine looked up brightly, delighted at the praise, and already comforted. The kind, vibrating voice had not lost its charm for her; and the young are so easily made happy. He had begun to paint now, and seemed quite engrossed. Geraldine was singing softly to the baby. Time went on; the child had fallen asleep, and the young mother had stopped singing; the light was beginning to wane; and Arthur l'Estrange was working hard and steadily at his sketch; Geraldine came up to him and stood looking at it.

"I like it so much! How well you have caught the dreamy expression in her face, and the sad history which looks out of her eyes! I had no idea you could draw that size—you might be a miniature-painter, if you liked."

"I had rather not," he said, lightly, and laughed; "my eyes would not stand it."

Silence fell on them both again, and the artist continued his work. At last a servant came in to light the lamps.

"I must make haste, or I sha'n't catch my train," Arthur said, looking at his watch, and beginning to put up his things.

"I wish you would stay, to please me; I don't know what to say to Colonel Trevelyan; he was angry this morning, and I did not like to tell him you would not."

The pretty, pleading, pathetic face lifted to his, the childish voice, the childish speech—all touched him only too much, and shook his resolution. There were traces of tears on the face too—tears which ought not to have been there. Then he remembered Colonel Trevelyan's haughty, moody temper, his bursts of almost insane fury, which, alas! were familiar to most of his friends, and were very generally vented on his dependants—there had been a scene with one of the keepers to-day, which had disgusted even good-natured Lord Devereux—and he shuddered when he thought how unprotected and lonely was this young girl's position, with all her luxurious surroundings. Her splendid home could not give her happiness; her great riches, her husband's old name—all were valueless, without mutual affection and mutual support.

They sat on, and the nurse came to take away the baby. Still Mr. l'Estrange did not leave; there was something so mournful and pleading in Geraldine's manner; he waited, hoping to cheer her, and talking to her almost as he had done in the old studio days; he was watching the clock, though, all the time, for he did not intend actually to remain—he had made up his mind to that; he was disgusted with Colonel Trevelyan, and was too much of a gentleman to care to accept the hospitality of a man he had never

respected, and whom he was beginning to dislike; but—alas for human resolutions!—the footman returned to announce that the Duchess of Clevedon was in the small library, and that he had taken the tea there.

Geraldine looked perfectly dismayed for a moment. Whether, in the excitement of the scene which had taken place in the morning, she had misunderstood her husband, or whether he had ever told her that her self-invited guest was to arrive that day, she could not remember; but at any rate, she had not expected her; and her surprise was most unpleasant—though in that well-ordered household a visitor more or less could not matter much. Still, it was a shock, and somehow Geraldine felt it so. She turned to Mr. l'Estrange as soon as the servant was gone, and said, impulsively:

"You cannot leave now; you will come and help me to receive her. I know I can count upon you; you are never unkind."

He felt as if some net were closing round him from which there was no escape; but he followed her as she asked, and they entered the room together.

The duchess embraced our heroine with effusion, exclaiming:

"How well and how blooming you are looking, my dear Geraldine—positively *embellit*! You know the French proverb—" She was going on, when, perceiving Mr. l'Estrange, she added: "Your brother, I suppose? Introduce me. I did not know you had one."

Geraldine had a most uncomfortable habit of blushing on the smallest provocation, and now she colored quite painfully, as she said, in her sweet, low voice, which was such a contrast to the loud and harsh tones of the duchess:

"Allow me to introduce Mr. l'Estrange."

Her grace was delighted.

"You have no idea, Mr. l'Estrange," she exclaimed, turning to him in her sweetest manner, "how much I have wished to make your acquaintance. I knew your grandfather in old days so well; though I was almost a child at the time, I shall never forget him—a man celebrated for his wit and social qualities, no less than for having the most agreeable *salon* in London; and talent is not likely to die out in a family, if all I hear be true. You are making as great a name for yourself as he would have done, had he cared to go in for a profession. Politics were what he liked best; but he was never actively mixed up with them; his opinion was thought well worth having even by the prime minister, whose most intimate friend he was. And I have often heard it said that, had he chosen to take a prominent part in the House, he would immediately have been offered a seat in the Cabinet. But he was one of those who prefer to be great for the good of their friends and belongings, and who see no use in wearing themselves out for the sake of an ungrateful country. Ah! those were good old times, better than these, when every philosophical re-

former will talk about what he does not understand, and assumes an infallibility on every subject, to which even the dear old pope would not pretend."

The voluble lady stopped at last, and Arthur thanked her courteously for her good opinion of himself, and endeavored to turn the conversation by asking her if she had been to see the Exhibition of Old Masters, then on view at Burlington House.

She had, and she was in raptures over one of Sir Joshua's—a little child in a mob cap and mittens. "Why cannot people paint such pictures now?—Geraldine, love, when your chick is old enough, you must ask Mr. l'Estrange to do a picture of her just in that style. Ah! I forgot; it's a boy. What a bore!—though it was quite right for the first."

Our heroine colored again; one of those hot, violent blushes she so detested. She felt angry with herself, and called herself school-girlish, missyish—all that she most hated. Mr. l'Estrange did not think her this; but she seemed to know that the woman of the world despised her.

It was a relief to them all when Colonel Trevelyan appeared, looking so handsome and manly in his shooting-attire that most women would have thought him irresistible. He had perfect manners, too, when he chose; his good-humor had returned; and he was particularly pleased to find that Mr. l'Estrange had not left, as her grace wished to meet him; and she was apt to be imperious in her desires.

The talk went on glibly and gay-

ly until the dressing-bell rung, the duchess making them all forget how late it was by relating some very good stories, which she had brought with her from London. She had a great talent for society; had lived in it all her life from almost a child; knew every one, went everywhere, and was generally liked—at all events, in her own set—giving herself fewer airs than fine ladies usually do, and being, when it suited her, decidedly agreeable and good-natured. But then you must not come in her way; she would crush you like a worm if you did; and poor Geraldine at this moment was most certainly in her way.

### CHAPTER XIII.

"The lady never made unwilling war with those fine eyes."

I HAVE said that Arthur l'Estrange was a good man. It dawned upon him very slowly that there could be any thing unworthy in the friendship which existed, and was evidently of long standing, between the Duchess of Clevedon and Trevelyan's haughty owner. He took a dislike to her at the commencement of their acquaintance, and her flattering civilities to himself failed to overcome the aversion. He particularly resented her manner to Geraldine; it was so fawningly affectionate, but patronizing; and Mr. l'Estrange thought he detected a latent sneer in it. To Colonel Trevelyan it was all that was open and friendly; and Arthur would probably have come to the end of his visit without suspecting any

thing unusual, but that the proud and overbearing man was so evidently frightened by her grace, so deprecatory in his attentions to her, so painfully anxious to promote a good understanding between the duchess and his wife, and yet to allow no intimacy between them.

The other men had left, and the colonel and his lady guest either hunted, or, when the hounds did not meet, they generally rode together. Arthur accompanied them sometimes, but more than once had felt *de trop*; and her grace, though a good horsewoman, was a most tiresome one, always requiring some attention or some difference of pace, and pretending to be alarmed at what really was a matter of perfect indifference to her. So it generally ended in his coming in earlier than the others; and finding some remains of light in the picture-gallery, he used to set to work, and occasionally he found Geraldine there, for it was one of her favorite resorts with the baby on those long winter days. Sometimes they hardly spoke beyond the merest civilities, at others they talked incessantly, principally about pictures. Mr. l'Estrange advised Geraldine to have drawing-lessons when she went to London. He foresaw long hours of solitude for her; and he knew by experience that nothing is so engrossing and all-absorbing as drawing. She had a good eye for color, had already mastered some of the drudgery, and was likely to find great pleasure and delight in sketching from nature, which she passionately loved. These long afternoons were times of great enjoy-

ment to both. Geraldine learned to look forward to them, and to listen with a pleasure quite unfeigned to the artist's enthusiastic admiration of some Turners which had lain in a portfolio for years; and though only sketches, were beautiful as Turner's earlier manner was—beautiful as no other water-colors have ever been or ever will be—with expression and tenderness and color and touch all combined. Geraldine, when she found how much these sketches were admired, had other portfolios hunted out, and a unique collection of water-color drawings was thus unearthed from cupboards and drawers, affording unmixed pleasure to both. He knew so well how to point out every beauty, and she so intelligently appreciated all he said, that when the servant came to light the lamps, they neither of them could believe how late it was. They talked principally about art. Mr. l'Estrange had seen all the finest pictures in Italy and elsewhere, and tried to describe some of them to his young hostess, who, during her brief honeymoon, had walked through the Louvre, and remembered some of the treasures there. Then they talked of the lives of artists—how much earlier they achieved great renown in old days than now—how much more they really studied and made it the business of life than modern painters do. Of course, they moralized upon all this; but I don't think they ever even came near any sentimentalities.—Geraldine had a very healthy mind, but a most vivid imagination. Mr. l'Estrange saw that her intellect required culti-

vation, though in some things her education had not been deficient. She played the piano really in a manner which gave pleasure to her hearers, not so much for its brilliancy, as for her feeling and exquisite touch. Those parts of history which had interested her she was thoroughly versed in, and up to any discussions. She knew more of history than of other things, because it touched her imagination, and she had a marvellous memory. Many pages of Lamartine's "Girondins" she could repeat by heart, and she tried to convert Mr. l'Estrange to like that author. He replied that French sentiment could not touch him, it was so false. She quoted long pages from her favorite authors. Her knowledge of poetry, too, was extensive; and she had acquired the habit of learning a fresh piece every day. Mr. l'Estrange advised her to begin a regular course of reading, and gave her the names of books, both tough and light, which he recommended. He saw with dismay that it was an atmosphere in which all that was brilliant in her imagination would either wither or feed upon itself—that she would grow weary of herself and of her self-imposed tasks without any one to share her interest in them. She had read a great deal with her father, who, though not exactly intellectual, was extremely painstaking, and to a certain extent studious; and Geraldine's bright intelligence had responded readily to all he tried to teach her.

My readers will wonder that Colonel Trevelyan, so eminently a man of

the world, did not see danger in this intimacy, innocent though it was, between Mr. l'Estrange and his young wife. But, though he had ceased to be in love with her, he put implicit faith in her goodness and purity; and if he thought about it at all, he would have laughed and said, "An ugly fellow like L'Estrange could have no chance against himself." Like all exceedingly handsome men, he was inordinately vain, and believed himself omnipotent. He would have sneered at the idea that any woman could prefer talking to a clever and cultivated man, when he, whose beauty was so universally acknowledged and admired, was present. His ideal of women was low, and always had been, even when a boy; and he had married too late in life to be taught a different lesson now.

Reader, if a man tells you that he has no belief in women—that they are all bad, heartless, frivolous, inconstant—distrust his past. A good man may outlive many good things, but he will never outlive the instinct which makes a baby boy cling to his mother before all the world, and which makes that same baby, grown to a man, cleave to the one woman whom he has wooed and won, in sickness and health, in adversity and prosperity, through all life's journey, acknowledging her influence ever more and more as time goes on—loving her with a holier love—reverencing her with a deeper veneration, and recognizing that God's best gift, especially to the busy man, is a wise, tender, Christian wife.

Meantime the weeks went on.

The duchess had been at Trevelyan a fortnight, and still she did not talk of leaving, and still Arthur watched her uneasily and dared not leave. It seemed such a home for that pure, gentle, confiding girl; he so dreaded that some day her eyes would be opened, or that some gossiping friend would enlighten her; for he could not doubt that at one period of their lives the duchess and his host had been more to each other than the world would approve. He lingered on; and nothing could well be sweeter to both, or more entirely innocent, than his long talks with Geraldine upon men and things—books read and discussed together—passages read by Geraldine in the morning, and kept for him to look over in the afternoon—attempts she made with her pencil, and which were corrected by him. It was not wise; for, had there never been any thought of love between these two, this was the way to make it take root and grow up; and if nothing worse came of it, how sadly must this exceptional and sweet companionship be missed some day by both!

Neither of them, however, thought of this; they revelled in the sunshine of the moment, and forgot the weary hours and days which were pretty sure to follow—forgot that the very fact of seeing each other, as they did, day after day, of exchanging thoughts and feelings, and opinions, would make a solitude by-and-by for them in this world which nothing could fill—a solitude more ghastly than mere loneliness can ever be; for to miss out of your life the being who has become

all in all to you—who wakes your latent enthusiasm, helps you to be your highest and truest self, sympathizes with your discouragement and your failures, but still urges you to fight the battle which should end in victory to us all—is to make an end of life; so that with Job we could wish we were dead, or say with the patriarch Jacob, "Few and evil have the days of my life been."

So suited were these two to each other, that I could not but grieve when I saw them together, and recollected that a mischievous fate had forever severed them—that they never could be any thing to each other; and that, moreover, there was danger in their friendship, pure though it was, and good though they both were. They loved each other still, almost unconsciously; for the girl was too innocent to believe that it was possible to love except a husband or a wife; and the man drifted gradually into it—as even good men do—shocked first at the loveless home he found her in, hoping to protect and help her, and not stopping to analyze the feelings which prompted him.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

"Dearly bought the hidden treasure  
Finer feelings can bestow;  
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure  
Thrill the deepest notes of woe."

In the autumn of the same year we find Mr. l'Estrange again at Trevelyan. He had engaged to paint Colonel Trevelyan's picture, as a pendant to Geraldine's. Asked by her—en-



treated, indeed—he could hardly refuse. They have met pretty often in London, and still find the same objects of mutual interest and attraction in the books and the paintings they discuss.

The artist has nearly completed the portrait, and has so many pictures on hand for next year, that he feels he must shortly leave. The poor little sickly heir of Trevelyan is fading fast now, and even the young mother is beginning to awaken to the sad truth. Geraldine's tears are falling thick and fast upon its tiny face, when one evening Mr. l'Estrange found her again in the room where he had first seen her as a wife—the small library at Trevelyan. Next to the picture-gallery, it is her favorite resort. He tried to comfort her, and the musical, kind voice soothes, if it does not console. She was ashamed of betraying so much emotion before him, and said with a ghost of a smile: "You know it is so unlucky to cry over a baby. I can't think how I can be such a goose."

Almost as she spoke, the stately nurse sailed in to carry off her charge; and taking him from his mother's arms, she said, with a thoughtlessness that sort of people so often show:

"I declare, ma'am, I think he's lighter every time I bring him down. He is so like a little bird, I sometimes think he will fly away and leave us altogether."

She did not mean any thing special, though she must have realized that the child could not live; but the effect of her words on the poor young

mother was sad to witness. Almost before the door was closed, she laid her head on the sofa, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

No man likes to see a woman cry—no manly man, I mean; and when it is the woman we love above all others, it is harder still. Arthur l'Estrange would have given worlds to be able to console her—to have the right to do so—to have laid the young head on his breast, and stroked the soft hair—to have held her little hand in his, and to have shown her by his mute sympathy that he grieved with her. All this was denied him; he could only say the cold, commonplace words of comfort which are so powerless to soothe. At last he felt that he must try and rouse her. She had ceased weeping; but she sat still, with her head bowed upon her hands, convulsive, long-drawn sighs occasionally escaping from her.

"Mrs. Trevelyan, you will make yourself ill. You must consider yourself as well as your child; and you will not be able to care for and tend him if you exhaust yourself like this. Pray try and remember how common it is for children to be ill and to get well again. I know little about them myself, but I have heard my mother say they ought never to be despaired of. Indeed, I believe I am a remarkable instance of it myself. I was given over by doctors several times, and yet here I am to answer for myself, after nearly thirty years spent in this world. Come," he added, "you are too kind to sadden my last evening here by seeing you like this. Shall we go on

with 'Ecce Homo?' or would you rather play me that new piece of Heller's?"

She was roused now, and, glancing at him with a scared look, said:

"Are you really going? Do you know there will be no one then to care whether baby dies or not? I only wish I could follow him."

She spoke with a weary dejection and hopelessness which shocked Mr. l'Estrange.

"My dear Mrs. Trevelyan," he said playfully, "what heresy is this? Colonel Trevelyan is wrapped up in his little son; and though perhaps he does not show his feeling just as you do, I know he is most anxious about him."

"That's it; you have just said it. He is anxious, and he will be miserable if any thing—"

Here she broke down again, but recovered more quickly, and went on almost passionately:

"He will say it is my fault—he has said so before—when I would gladly give my life for the child. Ah me, Mr. l'Estrange, you don't know what dreadful things have come into my head lately. You have called me good, and true, and gentle, and so I believe I used to be; but I have changed since those days. Sometimes a demon possesses me, and I doubt every thing. I wonder why my husband married me, for I am sure he does not care for me. I wonder most of all why one is created to be so miserable—to feel that one is doing good to no one, is loved by no one. Most people have some one to love them. When baby is gone, I shall have no

one. He would have loved me by-and-by. Even now the touch of his dear hand upon my face—the waxen touches, as Tennyson says—do me good—untold good. I never feel wicked and bitter when he is with me, and his little face is pressed against mine. I never feel then that I wish to die; I wish to live for him—to grow into a good woman for his sake; to learn many things, that I may teach him to be wise, and that he may be proud of his mother. And now—and now they tell me he is going away from me—going away! O, Mr. l'Estrange, only think of it!—my sweet baby, my treasure, who since he was born has never had a rough wind to blow upon him, is going out of the world without me, without any one to care for him!—the poor little innocent darling, who has never committed a sin, and is to suffer that awful curse, Death! I should not mind it for myself—at least, I think not; but for him, my baby—my baby!" she wailed on.

Mr. l'Estrange could hardly force back the tears which came into his eyes—eyes unused to weep. He felt that this was a grievous case: the wife only eighteen, and the husband tired of her! His neglect was cruel, his indifference marked. He was not actively unkind, but he was never loving or tender to the young girl he had vowed to cherish and protect as long as life was his. If Geraldine had cared for her dress, and her diamonds, and her fine houses, she might have been consoled; and no doubt there were alleviations in her lot. It is better to repent of your marriage in a palace

than a cottage; but just now in her grief she did seem desolate. Mr. l'Estrange did not seem to hear what she had said of her husband; he knew she would regret it in her calmer moments. He only answered her pathetic appeal about the child:

"And if you are not afraid to die, who have lived eighteen years in the world, and still feel that God's is the best home, can you not trust your baby to His love, and feel sure that He will welcome your dear little child into His heaven? Can you not give what you love most to Him who gave us His only Son to die upon the cross, that we might live forever? I do not know so much of these things as you do; I fear I have not thought of them one-half so earnestly; but my mother says she can bear any trouble if she thinks of Jesus. It is the only thought that does her any good. He suffered, and He loves us, and He must know that it is good for us if He makes us suffer too. It is a rough world—even you think so; and should you not rejoice that your child will be so early taken out of it—that he will know none of the struggle and suffering which come to even the happiest lives? 'Those whom the gods love die young,' is the heathen's idea; and shall Christians recognize this less? I wish you knew my mother. She has suffered a great deal, but she always says she is thankful. She looks upon heaven as her only home, and is sure that having those we love already there makes it still more home, and that they are waiting for us, and will welcome us."

Mr. l'Estrange did not leave. The child died suddenly in the night, after a series of convulsions, one more frightful than another; and even Colonel Trevelyan was quite overcome. He forgot his haughty hardness, and entertained the young artist to stay and help him.

Upon Mr. l'Estrange devolved all the arrangements of the funeral, and every thing else that had to be done. Colonel Trevelyan had a horror of death, and of all connected with it; it unnerved him completely, and it had never seemed to come so near him before.

Mr. l'Estrange saw nothing of Geraldine for a fortnight after the funeral. Then he felt he must leave, and sent to ask if Mrs. Trevelyan would like to see him. The answer was "Yes," and the servant ushered him up to her boudoir in a part of the house where he had never been before.

She was lying on a sofa, looking so ill and weary, so fragile too, that his heart ached. She shook hands with him, however, quite calmly, and as soon as the door closed, thanked him courteously for all he had done for them, and for the help and comfort he had been to her husband. She spoke in cold, measured accents, as if she could hardly trust herself to speak; and Arthur l'Estrange's voice shook as he tried to comfort her. The beauty of the room, its perfect appointments, the costliness of the furniture, and the luxury of its adornments, were in such sad contrast with the young and sorrowful girl who craved for love and had not got it, who had lost in her

child all that gave her its semblance.

"Ah, do not speak of it!" she said, almost wildly, wringing her hands; "you mean well, you are very kind, but no one knows what it is but myself. I cannot bear it. I am not resigned. I wish I was dead too! I should like to go and take care of him in his cold grave. My own little child, my darling, my love! to think of their having put him into that narrow box, and covered him with earth—to think that they have shut him out from me and me from him, and with him all the sunshine of my life. He is quite alone, poor little helpless baby, calling to me, and I don't go! All night I hear him, and I hoped I was going to him once or twice, for they seemed frightened about me; but I am very strong—nothing kills—certainly not sorrow! I so long to see him again, and I always can when I shut my eyes. I can lie here by the hour and do that; and then I see him and talk to him as I used—but soon comes the cold reality, and I wake to find him gone. It was cruel the way they took him away. I had gone to get snowdrops and violets to put upon his dear little face, and when I came back, they had shut him up in that awful thing, and I never saw him again. I don't know what happened afterward, for I believe I was ill. I hoped I was going to die; I thought I was—it felt very much like death. Mamma says I am very wicked when I talk like this; she tells me she cannot understand me. She lost two little babies, and though she was very sorry—of course she was very sorry—

still she did not feel as if her life was ended. She says I have got every thing that heart or eye can wish for, and she had so little. I don't know what she means. My head seems to be going round when she talks to me like this, and I feel worse than if no one spoke to me at all. I am much better when they leave me by myself. I can see him then, and talk to him, and pray that he may be given back to me, and sometimes I almost think he is."

Then she stopped, and was silent for some time. Mr. l'Estrange was alarmed.

"Forgive me," she said, at length; "it is the first time I have really spoken, but you have been very kind, and I thank you."

She stretched out her hand to him; he took it reverently.

"I wish you could know my mother," he said, gently; "she would comfort you, if any one can. Shall I tell you the story of her life?"

She did not answer, and he went on:

"She has had so much sorrow. She was engaged to my father for a great many years, but they were not allowed to marry, as my grandfather did not consider it a suitable match for his only daughter. At last, after ten years of patient waiting, their constancy was rewarded, and consent given. My father was presented to a very good living in Devonshire; they were married, and my mother always says that to have had three years of such happiness should reconcile any one to life—it was short-lived, but as perfect as any thing on earth can be.

My father, never very strong, had overworked himself while a malignant fever was raging in the village; he caught a cold, which ended in rapid consumption, and died after only six weeks' illness. My mother, no longer a very young woman, had to leave the home of her blissful wedded life, and go forth with her two little children to seek another. We had been sent away, and so escaped infection; but she has often told me that, but for God's goodness, she must have gone mad, or died then—the blow was so awful and so sudden, and her whole heart had been wrapped up in her husband. She was expecting a third child too; and oh, the sadness of its birth, with no father to welcome it, or to bid her have courage! She went to my grandfather for some months, and remained there till she was strong enough to face her lonely life. He was displeased that she would not live entirely with him; but her heart ached to be near the church-yard where her husband lay; and though many people could not have borne to see a stranger in his place, she felt differently, and could not tear herself away from the scenes of her great happiness. We lived in that lovely spot until I was ten years old. But her sorrows did not end even here. My sisters both died; one was seven, and the other only lived to be three years old—she had never been strong, that poor little child born after my father's death; but my mother idolized it. Her baby, she often said, was like a message from Heaven to console her and bid her live. God took it away, and then for a time she was

quite heart-broken. She wandered from place to place, seeking peace and finding none. At last, for my sake, she settled near Windsor, where she lives still. I went to Eton; and you know the rest."

Geraldine had been roused from her apathy by Mr. l'Estrange's story. She sat up a little; but he was grieved to see that her heavy black gown hung upon her, and that the fair hands which lay so listlessly in her lap were already wasted.

"I should like to know her, if she is like you. But no one can do me good. If papa could have come, he would have understood."

"Shall I tell my mother to go and see you when you come to London?" he asked. "She would like to do so, I know, and she has ever been welcome to mourners—hers has been such a life-long sorrow, that there is none that she cannot enter into and understand. Mercifully, I trust she has found peace at last. She must have had an awful struggle to attain it; for she has a very strong nature, and natures such as hers, physically as well as morally strong, are apt to rebel against suffering more than weaker ones would."

"By-and-by perhaps I could bear it; but now I had rather talk to you. Mamma won't listen to me, and Edmund seems frightened when I ask him; but I want to know, do you really believe I shall see my baby again? Where do you think he is? Oh, if Mr. Austen were but here, he could tell me. Why did God take him away—he who had never sinned? I understand that death should follow

upon sin, but how can a baby sin? Where is he gone, and why? Happy people, with husbands that love them, keep their children, and mine is gone! I envy John Goodman's wife! You know she nursed my little baby, and she was so kind to him, and she has four lovely children to climb upon her knee and to hang round her neck; and John, her husband, adores her, and says there is not such another woman in all the world. He only spared her to us because he said he was sorry for me. It must have been because they thought baby always delicate that they were both so kind. Sometimes I think I must go away; I cannot live here! The nurseries open out of this room. Colonel Trevelyan did not wish it at first, but he was kind about it, and gave me my way; and now they are silent rooms, and so dreary. Would you like to come in?"

She got up languidly, and to humor her Mr. l'Estrange followed. The sad tidiness of that big, beautiful room struck even upon him with a pang—the cot wheeled into a corner and covered up, the toys all put away. Only one vestige of the dead baby remained: a little shoe and sock, probably forgotten by the nurse, lay in a corner of the mantel-piece. Geraldine walked straight up to it, took it mechanically, and put it into her dress. The nurse, who was sitting by the fire doing some work, looked surprised at her mistress's entrance. She got up respectfully, and saying, "I hope you feel a bit better, ma'am," left the room.

But the sight of the desolate nursery was too much for the poor young

mother. She sat down on a low nursing-chair near the fire, and burst into an uncontrollable passion of weeping—a weeping so sad and so terrible that it threatened to rend body and soul asunder—a weeping which was agony to see, as it was agony to suffer, but it was better than the unnatural calm—had Mr. l'Estrange known it. He was, however, really alarmed; and, having rung the bell, the nurse sent for Mrs. St. Vincent.

She tried soothing at first, and then began to scold every one—the nurse for not having summoned her sooner; Mr. l'Estrange for having allowed her daughter to come into this room; and the unfortunate Geraldine herself, who was now so utterly exhausted that she lay back with her eyes shut, and apparently with very little consciousness of what was going on around her.

Mr. l'Estrange, feeling he could be of no further use, and quite overcome by the sad scene, left the room, and shortly afterward the house.

## CHAPTER XV.

"To be her champion,  
And war with fiends for her; that were a 'quest'—  
That were true chivalry."

"COME to me; I must speak to you,  
and at once. G. T."

This was all the note contained, except the date; and as Mr. l'Estrange had never seen Geraldine's handwriting, he would have been altogether at a loss as to who his correspondent was, but for the direction, "Grosvenor Square," and the initials. He had had

no communication with the Trevelyan's since he left them six months before, after the death of the poor baby. He had called several times in Grosvenor Square to inquire after our heroine, and had been told she was not in town—that no one knew when the family would arrive, as they had gone to the sea-side for the health of Mrs. Trevelyan, who was very far from well.

Arthur could neither ignore nor disobey the summons, though he now fully realized that the less they saw of each other in the future the better. It was already early in the afternoon when the note reached him; but he lived so far from fashionable precincts, that he did not wait to do more than put away his pictures; and, having left word with the servant that his model was not to wait for him, he hailed a hansom cab, and was soon on his way to Grosvenor Square. The door flew open, and besides the porter, Mrs. Trevelyan's own servant was evidently waiting to conduct him to the presence of his mistress. He found Geraldine pacing up and down the long drawing-room, looking flushed and excited, but considerably stronger than when last he had seen her. She shook hands with him in silence, but no sooner had the door closed than she said, almost wildly:

"You will forgive me for troubling you. I have no one to consult, no one to help me, and I am almost beside myself. My father is gone abroad to recruit after his accident, and of course my mother is with him. Read that."

She spoke so abruptly, her manner

was so unlike herself, that Arthur was both surprised and alarmed. He took the letter she held out to him, and had no sooner glanced at it and at the signature, than the mystery was solved. It was from the Duchess of Clevedon to Colonel Trevelyan, and left no doubt, even upon a mind so innocent and unsuspicious as Geraldine's, of the nature of the connection between them. It referred slightly to the young wife and her bitter weeping over her dead child, and pitied him for being tied to so senseless a being. It was evident that the writer was really attached to Colonel Trevelyan, and was bitterly jealous of even the little kindness which the death of their child had caused him to show his wife; that she regretted the seclusion in which he had lately lived; and that she sought to see him immediately on his arrival in London.

"I found it in his dressing-room, when I went to get something for him, which he wanted for his foot. He has not been well lately; he hurt his ankle, and was quite helpless for several days. I ought not to have read it, I know; but I picked it up on the floor, and put it into my pocket with some of my own letters; and until I got to the allusion to myself, I could not imagine from whom it came."

She spoke in cold, measured tones now, but with a degree of concentrated indignation, which was only restrained by a great effort.

"It accounts for this also," she said, handing him an anonymous letter, which warned her in coarse terms to beware of a certain aristocratic

lady, high in the scale of the upper ten thousand. "I got this some months ago, but was too miserable to take any notice of it. Now, this is more than I can bear, and I am going. I have sent for you to ask your advice—you have always been kind to me—where shall I go?"

He looked at her with grave compassion, much as you would look at a child—for to him she seemed little more.

"My dear Mrs. Trevelyan, you cannot leave your home because you have found a letter which—" he hesitated—"which I deeply regret should have ever fallen into your hands."

"You do not believe it?" she said, eagerly. "I do not love Colonel Trevelyan, but I would rather not believe it—for the sake of my dead child I would rather not. I should like to be able to respect my darling's father. Say you do not believe it, and I will thank you from my heart."

Mr. l'Estrange could not speak, but she read his answer in his eyes; and her husband's perfidy seemed all the blacker, that it apparently produced no surprise in her listener, and was evidently already known to him. The artist had not the faintest idea that she drew these conclusions from his manner. He had always dreaded the moment when she should be enlightened, but he was not prepared for the vehemence of her indignation, nor for the agony of shame and grief which overpowered her. He forgot that the very young are the harshest of judges, and that the seclusion and innocence of her life made her quite

ignorant of the temptations by which men of the world are surrounded.

"Where am I to go?" she repeated, fiercely, all her gentle feminine sweetness gone. "Advise me, for God's sake; I have not a friend in the world but you, and under his roof I will not stay! He promised as I did—he has broken his vows, I am free from mine; I will go."

"Dear Mrs. Trevelyan, where can you go? If your father and mother had been in England, you might have gone to them for a time; and I wish to Heaven they were within reach—for perhaps, under the circumstances, a temporary separation would be better for you both; but now I fear you must stay and bear it; and God help you! for man cannot."

"And is that all you have to say?" she broke in, passionately. "You, who call yourself my friend, ask me—expect me, to stay in this house, where the grossest insult to a wife has been dealt to me—me, who, poor wretch, have nothing to love, who have lost my little child, and with it every thing I cared for—his little child too; and I would have loved him for its sake, if he would have let me. Do you know that even my father cannot sympathize with me now, as he used, and that literally I seem to have nothing left in this world to care for; worst of all, I am beginning to doubt the existence and the happiness of another. That he could so deceive me! that that woman could come and live in our house, and stay under the same roof as my innocent child, and rob me and him like that! I see it all now.



Edmund was never the same to me after she came. Why, even the servants must have known it."

She colored all over in her passionate wrath: the shame of the whole hideous fact struck her with such horror, that she might have been the guilty one.

"Yes, I will go this very night! But where to? I am glad the baby is gone now. I should not have liked him to rough it, but I am young and strong, and can. Do advise me."

"Will you be guided by my advice if I give it?" Mr. l'Estrange said almost sternly. "Will you promise me beforehand to do nothing rashly?"

"I don't know, I can't say," she answered, awed by his manner, but still speaking fast, and as if she hardly knew what she was saying.

"If your father were here, would you listen to him?" he urged.

"Of course I would; how can you ask?"

"He would tell you to be patient, and to submit. You belong to your husband now, and can have no separate existence of your own. It is your duty to stay with him. Will you make his wrong right by leaving him? Because he has broken his vow, are you released from yours? Believe me, Geraldine, you are in your right place only in your husband's home and under his protection."

"There is a law—I am sure there is—which releases me," the girl said between her teeth, almost under her breath; but Arthur caught the words.

"Yes," he said gently, "there is the law."

"I thought so!" she exclaimed triumphantly; "I was sure there was some law which protects women. Tell me what it is."

"It is called the law of divorce," he said, sadly. "No doubt, if you choose to bring up this letter and other proofs, which I fear you could get, you could bring your husband's name into the Divorce Court, and the law in its present state would annul your marriage; but how you would bear it, God only knows. You shuddered just now to think that the servants knew of this unrighteous act. How would you feel if the whole of London could read in print all the details of the case against your husband? How would you like it to be the gossip, not only of private houses, but of the clubs? What anguish must be yours when you heard the proud name your little son would have borne, dragged through the dirt, loaded with infamy, derision, and spite, and you realized that it was your own act which had brought this about?"

The unfortunate girl clasped her hands above her head and said:

"Oh, spare me! you are cruel."

"It is you who are cruel," he said gently—"cruel to yourself, cruel to me, cruel to the man whose name you bear."

His heart bled for her, but this was not a moment in which to spare her. He felt that he must speak boldly, and make her face all the consequences of the step she was contemplating.

"You are young and fair, and, as you say, without friends who could or would protect you against your hus-

band. A woman always bears the blame, even when she is as guiltless as you are, and when the wrong is as hard to bear. If you leave the protection of your home, the world will say at once there must have been errors on both sides—faults of temper, or something. If you remain, you put your husband so utterly in the wrong, that every feeling of chivalry will rise up in him."

"You do not know him," she said sadly; "you judge him by yourself. He has neither chivalry nor any thing else. He thinks I am sufficiently honored by being his wife. He thinks a fine house and diamonds and a well-appointed carriage are all that a woman can or does care for; that they constitute sufficient happiness to make you able and willing to bear any thing—any indignity and degradation, for it is degradation that his conduct has brought upon me. You may say what you please—you may think what you like; but God never intended that there should be such a difference between men and women—that the code of morals should be strict for one and lax for the other. You think I am young, and can be no judge of these things. I was young once; but I am so no longer. I feel as old and weary of my life as a woman double my age might do. I wished to make a good wife. Even in my sorrow, almost unshared as it has been, I have tried to be an unselfish one; for my child's sake I have always thought tenderly of my husband; with all my heart I have wished and prayed and tried to do my duty—God knows I have. But it is

over now. No man should dare to insult his wife as Colonel Trevelyan has insulted me. He thinks of me as a child, and as such unlikely ever to suspect and discover his treachery. Ah me, a child! A child, then, with bitter experiences, with a loveless life before me—a dishonored home to live in. I ask you again, how am I to stay here and bear it? Do you think I would sully my lips by letting him know that I have discovered his secret? Do you think I am a woman to do this, or to reproach him? I would die first; and so I ask you, how am I to stay here? how am I to live my life under this roof, with that horrible secret burning in my heart—with its guilt pressing upon my soul, and dragging me down to the level of a sin so hideous? And him?—for, after all, he is my husband. I cannot bear that he should go to hell; and we know that for sins like this there can be no redemption—not even the blood of Jesus can wash away a stain so foul."

He let her rave on, being amazed and overwhelmed, and almost inclined to think she must have cared somewhat for the man whose faithlessness could move her to such indignation as this. He judged as a man would, not seeing that her pride was outraged so cruelly, that the insult was to her pure nature a more deadly one than it would have been to many women—to an older one perhaps, or to one who had seen more of its temptations and its sin. He was as sorry for her as he could be. But he also was agonized. What if she loved this husband, who

was so base? What if, on the other hand, he failed to prove to her that she must remain under Colonel Trevelyan's roof? What had life in store for her? And even if he was successful in his endeavor to promote peace between them, his chivalry no less than his love revolted from the task. It was a position which needed all his tact, all his goodness, all his unselfishness—nay more, all the real love he bore to the woman who stood before him, more beautiful than he had ever seen her, roused by her wrongs into an energy and decision of character of which he had not believed her capable; her blue eyes flashing, color in the sometimes too pale cheeks, the sensitive sweet mouth quivering with emotion, pathetic, pleading, and passionate by turns. Even when most indignant, she looked such a child; it seemed such a short time ago when he had known her to be one, when he might have sheltered her in his strong arms, and they might together have bid defiance to life's worst storms. He loved her so, he would have wished that rough winds should not blow upon her, that even the sorrows and the sickness to which all flesh is heir should not come near her; and now he was called upon to be her adviser and guide under circumstances almost unprecedented. He would have felt for any woman situated as she was; he felt doubly, trebly, fearfully for her; his heart beat, the veins in his forehead seemed to swell nearly to bursting; at that moment he could have killed Colonel Trevelyan, and felt no remorse. For one awful instant the

tempter spoke to him, and he listened. Was not the provocation great enough to excuse any thing?—the husband faithless already, and they had not been married two years; the wife so young too, with no brothers to fight for her, no friend to do battle in her behalf, her child dead, nothing to keep her in that unhallowed home!

He loved her so dearly, that she would never know what the world thought of her—what she was giving up for his sake—his devotion should make up for all. Colonel Trevelyan was sure to sue for a divorce, and they could be married and live abroad; the circumstances were so exceptional, that in time even good people would visit them, and would realize that it was a case for pity and pardon instead of condemnation. All this passed through his mind in much shorter time than it has taken me to tell it you; and then her own words came suddenly back to him. A great pity came into his heart, a divine pity—for it has in it less of earth than any other human emotion—and he talked to her tenderly, wisely, and soothingly. He bade her still hope; he reminded her that things are rarely so black as they seem; that God can and does give strength to those who meet an untoward fate bravely; and that nothing should make us despair but our own sin.

She was almost calm, when Colonel Trevelyan's voice sounded on the staircase. All her frenzy seemed to return, and she rushed from the room, exclaiming, "I cannot meet him, I cannot see him! I cannot indeed."

Mr. l'Estrange gave her time to

make her escape, and then left the house. It was dark already—he had been there for hours—much longer than he had any idea of; and he and Colonel Trevelyan brushed past each other on the staircase without any recognition, except the mere formal one of a passing bow. It was fortunate they did so; for Mr. l'Estrange felt that, to save his life, he could not at that moment have shaken hands with his former friend. He called the next day in Grosvenor Square, and learned that Mrs. Trevelyan was very ill, and could see no one. The same answer was given every day; and one night, three weeks later, when he met Lady St. Clair at dinner, she told him that Geraldine had had a nervous fever; that she had been extremely ill, though never in actual danger; that the doctors had forbid her seeing any one, remaining in London, or going back to Trevelyan for the present, as it was evident she had not at all recovered the shock of the child's death. So Colonel Trevelyan had taken a moor in Scotland, to which they would go as soon as she could be moved.

Arthur called several times in Grosvenor Square after this; but evidently the doctor's orders were peremptory, for he was never admitted. He was shown the daily bulletin; and one day, when the report overnight had been infinitely more satisfactory, and he had hoped to have a glimpse of her, the servant informed him that Mrs. Trevelyan was so much better, she had that morning started for Edinburgh in an invalid-carriage, the doctor travelling with them.

Weary and heart-sick, Arthur also left London, and went down to his mother for a few weeks; and at last, resisting all her entreaties, he announced that the fever of travel was upon him, and that he must go abroad.

And so God saved these two; and some months later, when he was settled at Rome and could think of Geraldine more calmly, he was thankful. On those lovely moonlight nights, which in that sunny clime are nearly as light as day, he thought of little else; he recalled the innocent pathetic face, and was grateful that no remorse mingled with the recollection; that his love had not brought that saddest of all dooms upon the woman who could not, in the sight of God, be his loved and honored wife. At other times he thought of her with a mad and feverish longing—a longing which grew day by day. He would have given the best years of his life to clasp her little hand in his for one moment, to hear her sweet low voice, to look once more upon the face which haunted him. He even accused himself of pusillanimity. Why had he not rescued the woman he loved from a fate like hers? why had he left her to live that death in life? Chained to a man she could not care for—whom she did not even respect—was not any fate preferable to this, and would not God forgive them? What was there to prevent them from passing their lives together—giving up all for each other? God, who had made human beings to love each other, who had created them with such strong and tender feelings,

could not intend them to suffer eternally misery like that which had consumed his heart for years. God, more merciful than men, would judge them rightly and forgive. He cursed himself for his folly and his weakness; and had almost made up his mind to return to England.

Of course his mother took care that he got the English newspapers pretty regularly; and when he had been away a little more than a year, he read of the birth of another heir to Trevelyan. He tried to pray that some sunshine might come into the lonely life of the young mother. But a few months later he missed the paragraph which announced the death of the poor little boy; and thus it came about that he never even wrote to her. He had often longed to do so, but he dared not; he felt that in a letter he must tell her how passionately, and madly, and vainly, he loved her; how he was endeavoring to crush that love out of his life; how he was striving with might and main to think of her only as a friend. Time, the great healer, brought him some relief at last; and he threw himself heart and soul into an historical picture which he had long had in his mind to paint, and which was the largest work he had yet undertaken.

## CHAPTER XVI.

"For already it is gone;  
God's blessing on her earlier years bestowed,  
The clear contentment of a heart at ease."

WE pass over five years, and find my heroine again in London, looking a

much older woman than her years, and certainly a sad one. She is very handsome—handsomer than when first we made her acquaintance. Just as every one had predicted who had seen her in her girlhood, she has developed into a very beautiful woman; but I think a stranger would have pronounced her to be fully three years older than she is. She has dark circles round her eyes, and a worn look in her face; a restless expression too, which some would have called discontent, and others sadness. The rich and beautiful Mrs. Trevelyan, what can she have to make her unhappy?—her husband so handsome and distinguished-looking; her grand London house; her stately and beautiful country home, with its gardens and conservatories, its vineries and pleasure-grounds. She has a great deal of good society too, and can pick and choose, and go where she pleases; she is always faultlessly dressed, has as much pocket-money or more than she knows what to do with; but she does not look in good health; she has lost the Hebe beauty we remember: the straight profile is really more striking, and the features are so good, that although her lovely color is quite gone, a painter would rather make a study of her face now than when she was seventeen. Her countenance has gained in expression; for, despite indifferent health, she has not been idle; she has become a well-read woman, retaining still much of the old marvellous memory; there is a good deal of intellect in her straight face, though such faces are not supposed to abound in it as a rule. Whatever

people may say, she has suffered much since we parted with her five years ago—one more boy had been born and had died, and she has only her little girls now, one of a year and a half old, and the other quite a baby. Colonel Trevelyan's temper has not softened under these trials, nor have they drawn him nearer to his wife. When the first child died—our poor little hero of the picture-gallery—he had for a time felt for her, and in his way sorrowed in her great sorrow; but successive disappointments have hardened his hard heart. He had married to have heirs, and he could not brook the failure of his hopes; in his worst moments he even reproaches Geraldine, and tells her she injures her health by grieving over the children who are gone.

They are in London now, and have been ever since the birth of the baby. Geraldine has been very ill, and is listless and apathetic, making her health an excuse for not exerting herself. She has just said she is at home to no one, and wonders that the pealing of the bell is followed by quick footsteps, which are nearing the drawing-room door. The footsteps sound familiar, and her heart begins to beat wildly, though she knows *he* is abroad—has been away now considerably more than four years—they seem to her like ten.

Mr. l'Estrange is announced; and, the first surprised greetings over, which I always think, after long absence, have in them more of pain than pleasure, he begins to apologize for disturbing her.

"Do not scold your servants; it is not their fault. I would not take

'No.' I want you so very much to do me a kindness."

His manner is hurried and nervous, and very unlike himself.

"You have often heard me speak of Miriam Lisle, the girl whose portrait you so admired some years ago? She is very ill—nothing infectious, or I would not ask you; but her aunt is very poor and very ignorant. The girl has caught a severe cold—not the first, I imagine, this year; it has been neglected, and she is at this moment delirious, without a doctor, a nurse, or the commonest comforts. I have asked Coulthurst to visit her, but I dare interfere no further—the aunt looks at me with so much suspicion. The girl unfortunately talks of me perpetually—why, I know not, except that I have on one or two occasions shown her the most ordinary kindness. Now, will you go and see her? You will be doing a real act of charity, and I know your kind heart cannot fail to be touched by the forlorn position of this poor girl, and the unsuitableness of her surroundings."

He spoke almost breathlessly, and Geraldine looked and felt surprised. She had not seen Mr. l'Estrange for several years; she had been very ill, and illness makes us selfish.

"I would go with pleasure," she said, with some *hauteur*, "but I am ill myself."

The artist looked at her, and saw the lines of pain about her mouth—the weary dissatisfied look in those once sunny eyes. He had been half inclined to resent her manner; but, gazing at her, he could not. He felt

how much she had suffered; and though his own share of trouble had not been light, the man's true tender heart relented.

He had come to ask this favor of her, for he knew no one else to go to; but he never meant to renew the intercourse of the years that were gone. He had suffered too much; the torture was still too fresh. People who have suffered intense mental pain shrink from encouraging or renewing it with the same or with greater cowardice than those who dread physical torture.

I never believe in the sufferings of people who parade them for the sympathy of their friends, or who court the memories of great sorrows by keeping anniversaries, and who seem so afraid to forget that every thing outward is brought to bear upon their afflictions, and there is an incessant effort made to recall them to themselves and to others. Depend upon it, the pain has not been the unbearable agony which some griefs can be to some natures when this is the result.

Arthur l'Estrange felt he had suffered as much as he could bear, and he intended to see as little of Geraldine in the future as possible. He was afraid, and righteously afraid—afraid of the beseeching eyes, of the innocent face, of the woman, whose husband's faithlessness was now well known, and the common talk of club gossips. He loved her too well and too truly to wish that even a shadow should ever fall upon her name, or that the most incurable of scandal-mongers should have it in his power to couple it for an instant with any man's.

"You will go," he said, "I am sure, and be your own kind self. I can trust you to help them with money, and with what is far better, sympathy, as I know you have helped many poor wayfarers already."

"You know!" she said mournfully. "Why, you have been out of England for years, and how should you know any thing about me? And O Arthur, why did you never write to me? Why did you not come? I have been so miserable—both my boys gone, and nothing left to love!" she wailed rather than spoke.

The man's heart throbbed almost to breaking. She had never called him Arthur before, not even in the wild scene which had made him know that he must see her no more; that the old familiar intercourse must be as a dream; that he had better put seas between them; that art, and art alone, must be his mistress from henceforth. The pain in his face was so visible, that she said more gently:

"You did not forget me, did you?"

"Forget you, my poor child!" he answered, sadly; "I should think not! I thought of you—" He stopped abruptly. "I want to know why you should ask such a question."

"Oh, because even papa cares for me less than he did. He hardly ever comes to Trevelyan; and when he does, he won't stay. He and Edmund don't get on well together. Nobody remembers me, and that it is hard to bear."

She did not say what was hard; but suddenly a better mood came over her; and she spoke with her old sweetness.

"Think of my talking of myself, and this poor girl is so ill! I will order the carriage and go at once. Where did you say she lived—Bloomfield Place? I never even heard of it. At the back of our houses? Oh, then I am afraid! Colonel Trevelyan said I was never to go and see the poor people, even in the country, for fear of bringing back infection to the children."

"You need have no fear, I assure you, in this case. Colonel Trevelyan could not object. The girl is as respectable as possible, very superior to her station; and the aunt, too, must have known better days. The locality is where only the well-conducted and hard-working poor live. May I ring?"

And he turned as if to find his hat, and having rung the bell, to go.

"Are you not coming with me?" Geraldine said impulsively. "How shall I find the house?—how introduce myself to the people? It will frighten me to death!"

The man's heart gave another great painful throb. What would he not have given to go with her, to stay with her, to be with her forever! and even the short half-hour the drive would have given them together would have seemed like a glimpse of Paradise to him. But he knew it could not be; and having heard Geraldine order her carriage, he turned again to her, and with the great sweetness and unselfishness which characterized him, he said playfully:

"While the carriage is getting ready, do me one more favor: go and take off some of this finery, and put on

one of the quiet gowns you used to wear at Trevelyan; it will suit Bloomfield Place best."

Geraldine glanced up into his face with the same bewitchingly lovely smile which had first made his pulses beat, his brain reel, in the years which seemed so far off, when she had sat in his studio and he had painted the picture which, save at fleeting moments, had no likeness to her face now. He wished at that moment he had not come; nothing seemed worth it—philanthropy, kindness, humanity even, were better left alone. It was too dear a price to pay. His senses reeled; the room seemed going round with him. Where was the hard-earned composure of years?—where the strong and steadfast resolutions?—where the prayers which martyrs might have envied?—Where? All gone, defeated in a moment.

He never knew how he got out of the room till he found himself in the street, with the frosty March air blowing freshly upon his face.

As for Geraldine, she heard him say, "Good-by, Mrs. Trevelyan;" she felt his fingers tighten upon hers till the pain almost made her scream. She looked up into the face which had always worn so kind and pitiful an expression to her; she saw the unmistakable agony in it; and for the first time realized that the old love was not dead in Arthur l'Estrange's heart, and that what she had in her innocent girlishness taken for kindness and compassion was really the strong, undying love of the strong man's strong nature.



The consciousness brought a flush to her cheek—a joy she could hardly dissemble to the unloved wife. She had not, then, given her affection to one who despised her and it; she was not abhorrent to him, as she had sometimes thought? Poor child! She proceeded almost gayly to dress herself for her visit, and her face wore some of its old thrilling beauty, as she changed her light silken attire for a sober woolen suit. It was with much of her former elastic girlish tread that she walked down-stairs and got into the carriage. The solemn footman looked surprised when he heard where he was to go; but Geraldine's servants all liked her, and all gladly did her bidding. A quirk of Mrs. Trevelyan's would have been more respected by them than the most orthodox proceeding Colonel Trevelyan could have indulged in.

It was getting late when Geraldine neared her destination; and some of her old shyness returned upon her; but it was perhaps fortunate that it was so, for her carriage and its appointments would be less an object of curiosity to the inhabitants of Bloomfield Place, little used to such sights.

"What number did you say, madam? for Cobbett says he sha'n't be able to turn if he gets in much farther."

"Then let me out here," Mrs. Trevelyan answered; "and, Thomas, you had better follow."

She threaded her dainty way through the narrow-paved court into a still narrower street, until she came to a wide-open flagged place. She saw a

tidy-looking woman coming, and timidly asked her way.

"Straight on, up those stairs, my lady; and a great many steps, I fear, ye'll find it."

Geraldine dismissed the footman, and began the ascent. She did find it very weary work—she was out of health, and had in her great depression given up the habit of exercise. Still she plodded on, stopping every now and then to take breath. She did not meet many people on the way: a few dirty children, with weird white faces, and that precocious look which seems to belong to London children, stopped their game of ninepins to stare after the pretty lady; and one woman, old and decrepit, with dishevelled hair, and a hardly human expression in her haunting face, held out a shrivelled hand. Geraldine, as silently, put a shilling into it, and shuddering, passed on. As she got up higher, the place seemed to assume a more respectable appearance. She stopped at one door to inquire her way, and looked in; a very good-looking, neat young woman sat by the fire nursing a baby, and two lovely, rosy children were beseeching mammy to give them "sweeties." It was a pretty picture, and Geraldine halted gladly.

"Can you tell me Mrs. Friars's number, and whether I am near her rooms now?"

"One more flight, miss, and you come to them. She has three rooms on that flat, and the higher you go in Bloomfield Place, the airier it is; but won't you step in, ma'am, and rest a moment?"

Geraldine gladly accepted the invitation. The room was very neat, and there was an air of comfort about it.

"My husband is a policeman," the woman said, seeming glad to volunteer her information.

"And have you four children?" Geraldine asked; for her hostess looked hardly older than herself.

"Bless you, ma'am, yes, and have buried two; and Alice, there, came home to-day not at all well. She had a fall, the streets is slippery, and she have hurt herself somehow. Would you please to look at her, ma'am?" And with the alacrity which the poor almost always show to make any kind person a sympathizer in their sorrows, she led the way into a small inner room.

The poor child was flushed and feverish; it moaned uneasily, and its face was very much swollen. Geraldine turned away heart-struck. She felt sure the child was sickening for some terrible illness.

"I am afraid it is more than the fall," she said, gently. "Do send for a doctor!" and having put a sovereign in the woman's hand, who thanked her, she took her leave, and wended her way to the highest flight of the huge building. She knocked timidly at the door of No. 5; it was some time before a forbidding but highly respectable-looking woman appeared. She only opened the door a very little way, and said stiffly:

"What did you please to want, ma'am?"

"Does Miriam Lisle live here?" Geraldine answered.

"My niece, Miriam Lisle, lodges with me, but she is too ill to see any one now. I will give her a message by-and-by, if you will write it—for God knows it may be long before she will understand any thing again."

"But I came to see you also, Mrs. Friars;" she was going to add, "Mr. l'Estrange sent me;" when a subtle instinct warned her not to mention his name, and she added: "Dr. Coult-hurst, I think, is attending your niece."

The woman unbent a little—it was difficult to resist the winning sweetness of Geraldine's manner.

"You are very kind, I am sure, ma'am; the room is small, or I would ask you to come in. The fact is, that the least talking disturbs Miriam, and the doctor says her life depends on her being kept perfectly quiet."

Our heroine felt daunted and depressed. How was she to insist on entering this woman's abode against her own wish—under protest, as it were? She was dismayed, and had nearly given in, when a bright idea struck her:

"I am very tired after coming up all these stairs; if you will allow me to rest in your room for a few minutes, I promise not to speak; and it will be a real kindness."

Geraldine had been leaning against the wall all the time, and the woman was evidently struck by her pallor, for she said more naturally:

"You do look delicate, surely;" and moving aside, she suffered Geraldine to enter, carefully closing the door after her; then, pushing a chair

for her guest, she sat down opposite to her, with a weary look on her weather-beaten face.

"You will excuse me, I am sure, ma'am, but I have been up five nights running, and I have to work all day besides."

Geraldine was attracted by the great air of comfort and neatness which pervaded this small dwelling. She had enough experience of the poor to feel sure that the mistress of so well-kept an abode did not sit with her hands before her. Even the clothes which she had been ironing were put neatly in their places, and the room had many evidences of taste in its adornments; violets, spring violets, were in a little mug on the dresser, and some pots of primroses in full-growing condition flourished in the window-sill. The woman followed Geraldine's glances sadly:

"Ah! you wonder to see the primroses? Poor Miriam, she is fond of flowers—she brought in those plants and put them into pots the day she was taken ill. My firm belief is, she walked too far, or sat in wet shoes."

A low moan now came from the inner room.

"You will excuse me, I am sure, a moment, ma'am, but I can't ever leave her long."

She returned after a few minutes, and, looking scrutinizingly at our heroine, she said:

"You would like, perhaps, as you have come so far, to get a sight of her; you will not see any thing like her in life again; and she takes so little notice, it can't do her any harm."

Geraldine eagerly assented, and they entered the tiny but scrupulously clean bedroom. She could hardly repress an exclamation of amazement, the girl's beauty was so dazzling; the picture, well remembered, seemed to have left it far behind. Fever had flushed the lovely cheeks, had given a new lustre to the marvellous eyes. They were closed when Geraldine first approached the bed, but presently the heavy-curtained lids were raised, and though the light of reason had fled for the time, who that saw could ever forget their wondrous depths, their dilating size, their touching expression?

Geraldine laid her cool hand upon the burning one of the girl, and was struck then, as every one was on first seeing Miriam, by the beauty and shapeliness of her hands—by the utter incongruity between her and her surroundings. You do see such cases sometimes—you see beauty not only so uncommon but so high-bred—you see it in a cottage or the back-slums of London, and you say to yourself, "If that girl had been born in our rank of life, people would have raved about her."

Miriam Lisle was eminently one of these cases, her beauty was so great—as faultless as any thing on earth can be. Not only was her coloring exquisite, but the features were all good; her bearing was that of an empress, her walk and every movement were poetry to look at; her swan-like throat most perfectly set on her falling shoulders, her beautiful hands and arms, all were in keeping; and having begun as a little child to sit as a model to artists, and having made a great deal by it,

she had never been obliged to do a day's work in her life; indeed, she had added so much to her aunt's honest earnings, that but for the great anxiety which her extraordinary beauty caused the good woman, and her pious horror of painters, Mrs. Friars had found her kindness to her orphan niece by no means ill-rewarded.

"Good-looking, ain't she?" the woman said, with a grim smile, as she saw Geraldine's rapt admiration. "I have seen many handsome girls in my day, but none equal to our Miriam. Nevertheless it's a snare, ma'am, and has been even a grief to her, poor thing. There was Jem Stoker, the most respectablest lad we've had in our place, put an end to himself because she would have nothing to say to him. She made a great trouble of it at first, did Miriam; she has a tender conscience, not that she was in the smallest to blame, she never would even give him a civil word, but he just seemed to worship the ground she trod on."

The girl was moaning and muttering now, and Geraldine bent down to listen.

"If he had told me where he was going! Five years and not one word, and now I shall never live to see his kind face and thank him! I am coming, mother! Aunt did you speak? I really could not help it! Billy's told me! Let me stay and talk to the children! I can never go down those steps again! To think of his blood; it's sticking everywhere; it's coming after me; my shoes are full of it; it's on my dress, and his mother staring at me! She's speaking—she's pointing! Oh,

don't! don't curse me, for God's sake! I never even knew he cared like this! Away, away! I must get to the green fields! I must find the violets and primroses in the sweet spring-hedges! Mr. l'Estrange always had them in his studio—he liked them better than all the garden-flowers put together, he told me so. I will take him some to-morrow."

So she went on, beautiful always, with a beauty which would remain if she lived till she was an old woman, from which time could take nothing but the freshness, and to which illness had added instead of detracting.

Geraldine sat down by the bedside, and thoughtfully stroked the smooth and shapely hands. Something in the action, or in the sweet gentle face, arrested and soothed the sufferer, for she ceased moaning and muttering, and lay back on her pillow utterly exhausted. The bright color faded out of the lovely face, the radiant, restless eyes closed, their long lashes sweeping the soft cheeks.

The two women were about the same age, and a greater contrast could not be imagined, though in both beauty was remarkable. Miriam was incontestably handsomer, and had almost as much refinement of feature, and infinitely more brilliancy of coloring. Mrs. Friars was gradually becoming reconciled to her visitor; and seeing the effect she had upon her niece, she at length left the room, softly closing the door after her.

The sick girl seemed to doze for some time, and Geraldine sat on, interested in spite of herself, and fasci-

nated by the lovely marble face. Presently a fit of coughing roused her; she opened her glorious eyes, and looked vaguely at her visitor.

"The angels sit beside me!—am I already in heaven? O mother! are you here? I have so longed for you."

Tears came to Geraldine's eyes, but she was afraid to move. She resumed the soft stroking of the hand which lay so listlessly in hers; the wandering eyes closed again, and she had begun to talk to herself.

"I love him! oh, I love him! and it will be hard to go, and never see him more; never hear the kind voice, never look upon the good face, never, oh, never more! He is gone away, gone to study, he said, for his paintings, and I am sure he knew enough. I should be a wicked girl now but for him. He first taught me not to care so much for dress, and admiration; he was always kind and respectful to me, even when I was but a child. He lent me books to read—and talked to me about them—never about my looks, like the other artists. Ah me! to think I sha'n't see him again!"

Tears rolled down her cheeks, and she talked so quick and fast, that Geraldine could hardly catch what she said.

"I am glad to die, glad, glad since I shall never see him more. I am coming, mother, and so glad."

She opened her arms as if to clasp something, sat up wildly in bed, and fell back in a swoon. Her visitor, much alarmed, rushed into the adjoining room to tell Mrs. Friars, who hurried in, but did not seem surprised.

"It always ends like this if she

gets excited. Has she been talking? Ah, I thought as much; about Mr. l'Estrange, I'll warrant. I wish she had never seen the man"—she was saying angrily, when a knock at the door interrupted her; it was followed by the entrance of Dr. Coulthurst. He expressed surprise at the sight of Geraldine, whom he knew intimately; and whom he had often attended professionally; and advised her to return home as soon as possible, as it was getting late and cold. He paid a short visit to his patient; said there was no change since the morning; and then insisted on escorting Geraldine to her carriage.

Mrs. Friars took a grateful leave of her, and obtained a promise that she would come again next day.

Our heroine was glad of this opportunity of some conversation with Dr. Coulthurst, as she was anxious to ascertain in what way she could help the poor woman, and what his real opinion was of his patient.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"Such is woman: her tears are with God, her smiles with man: the heart may break, and who shall know it?"

It is a real April day—sharp showers and gleams of glorious sunshine. Mr. l'Estrange and his mother are on their way to the station.

"You have seen her," he is saying eagerly, "and what do you think?"

"I think she will recover, Arthur. I trust so, under God's providence."

"Ill! has she been ill? I had no idea it had been so bad as that."

"She has been at death's door, my dear boy. Even Coulthurst told me one day there was no hope. There was not only the disease to contend with, but such sad, such hopeless depression."

"I am very grieved," he said, anxiously; "I had no idea it had taken the form of acute illness; of course I have seen that she has been out of health for some time."

"Out of health! Are you dreaming, Arthur? Mrs. Trevelyan herself told me you came to her, six weeks ago, in a fever of anxiety."

"Mrs. Trevelyan, mother! We are at cross-purposes; for pity's sake enlighten me; of whom are you talking!"

"And of whom should I be talking, but of Miriam Lisle?" Mrs. l'Estrange asked with some little indignation.

She had made a journey; for her quite an event, as she rarely moved from home. She particularly disliked London, and had stayed in it six weeks instead of one, to please her son and to nurse Miriam Lisle. She had been struck by the dazzling beauty of the girl, had listened to her sad wanderings, and soon discovered her secret. She was ready to excuse her son's infatuation, though it was a grief to her. She was an aristocrat by birth, and knowing Arthur's exceeding refinement, had at least expected him to marry a lady. She would naturally have preferred a daughter-in-law with some of this world's advantages; but she meant to put all her own feelings aside for his sake. Had he not been the best of sons? Was he not all she

had in this world to love? And, remembering that, though late, she had been allowed to choose for herself in her own marriage, she determined to put no obstacle in her son's way, or to prevent any thing which he thought likely to contribute to his happiness. She would sacrifice a great deal to promote that, and she was very anxious he should marry. She was already an old woman; and Arthur was past thirty—quite old enough to know his own mind. Mrs. l'Estrange longed to see him with ties of his own; and then, she softly said to herself, she could die in peace—her work would be done. It was hard, when she had brought herself to this, to find she had been mistaken after all; but it is what all women must expect, all mothers especially. They hardly spoke again during their short journey; a railroad-carriage is not suited to the discussion of private matters, and Arthur had lost himself in one of his reveries. His mother did not sleep as usual; a new light was beginning to break upon her, and she was determined to make the meaning still more clear. That hasty expression of Arthur's had unravelled a good deal that was mysterious. She now saw things clearly that had puzzled and vexed her at the time; she now knew why he had gone abroad, why he had remained so long away, why he had seemed so exceedingly restless, unhinged, and miserable before he started.

That same evening, when the servants had left the room, and they were alone after dinner, she broached the subject; and like all women, young or

old, she began impulsively, and at the wrong end, though she had meant to use both tact and discretion, and had debated in her own mind all the afternoon as to what she should say.

"You asked me, Arthur, what I thought of Mrs. Trevelyan, when I imagined you were inquiring after Miriam Lisle—has she been ill too?"

"Not very lately, that I know of, mother," answered her son, rousing himself as if by an effort; "but she has been far from strong for years, and mistaking what you said, disease sounded formidable in one so delicate." He endeavored to speak lightly, but did not deceive the practised ear of the woman who loved him.

"Shall I tell you frankly, my son, the impression Mrs. Trevelyan has made upon me? I knew her only very slightly all the time you were away, but for the last six weeks I have seen her nearly every day, and under circumstances so peculiar, that I feel now I know her well. She is difficult to know—don't interrupt me—I have arrived at that conclusion too, but at some others which I should like to tell you, if you give me leave to say exactly what I think."

"Of course I do, mother; you are physician, lawyer, counsellor—all in one."

Mrs. l'Estrange smiled at the soft flattery, but her tone was grave as she went on:

"Of her health I can be no judge; she never speaks of it; and, indeed, of herself rarely: but I have not often, thank God, seen a woman so sorely tried as Mrs. Trevelyan. I have never

seen one with a conscience so tender, a nature so intensely pure, and in whom the standard of duty and of right is so high and so true. She has, if one may so speak, an almost morbid hatred of sin; yet there is none of the Pharisee about her. She might even prove weak where she loves; and her forgiveness, or rather her heroism, under injury is sublime: but for herself she would suffer agonies of remorse for venial faults of omission; and, alas, she will always carry a self-tormenting cross, as well as the heavy one which it has pleased God to lay upon her. But could actual sin and that woman become familiar, she would die; nothing could save her, and nothing would ever make her forgive herself, or even believe in the forgiveness of our Saviour. We have talked a great deal: she has peculiar opinions and theories, perhaps, but her religion, though vague and unformed, to her is very real. She is extremely unhappy, and turns to God much as a child turns to its mother in trouble—for, despite her great trials, she is still a child in many things—and she finds rest, but not peace; that she is vainly striving for, and God alone can give it to a nature like hers; God alone can bring that wave-tossed soul into His haven. She interests me deeply; her real heart-goodness is most rare and most touching; and all the more so that it has developed in such an ungenial soil. Many women would have hardened into worldliness, or become utterly selfish, under trials like hers: she is strikingly the reverse; and, however much she may mix with the world, she

will never be of it. Hers is a nature which happiness, according to our human ideas, would have suited best; but suffering has neither dwarfed nor stunted it; and, still more wonderful, it has not embittered her. I should like to see her happy. Although I have known her such a short time, I would give almost any thing to see some sunshine poured into that sweet, holy life, and, by-and-by, God grant that in her children she may find great blessedness! That God has reserved her for a high destiny one cannot doubt; and only by looking at it in that way can we understand why she should be so exceptionally tried. Harsh to herself and tender to others, Geraldine Trevelyan, will ever be; and she is living here the life which our Saviour bids us all live, and which, alas! we too often never even understand. She is humbly conscious of her own shortcomings, always endeavoring to be blind to the sins of others; and, as I said before, she is doing this, not because she has as yet realized all the beauty, all the strength, all the comfort of religion, but because her standard is high, her nature humble and loving and unselfish, and Christ is her model. She sacrifices herself, until her human nature seems daily to become more like the divine one. It is a very uncommon nature this, and one not likely to be appreciated in this nineteenth century. Do not think, because I have hitherto said little about her, that I am unconscious of her goodness. Your dear father was one of this sort; and I often think that such characters are unfit for earth; that they are lent for a time to

teach their struggling fellow-mortals how possible it is to live a high life here, even under disadvantageous circumstances; that the Life, the only one which was without blot on this earth, was not lived in vain; that the command, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect,' is not so impossible as it sounds, and that it can be obeyed in a measure by those who seek their strength from God. Faultless we cannot be; but we may make our standard high—the highest, if we please."

After this conversation, they often talked of Geraldine. Arthur liked to hear his mother speak of her, and was satisfied to know that she so entirely understood and appreciated her. But Mrs. l'Estrange was wise: she talked also much of another person, who interested her deeply, and that person was Miriam Lisle. It had been arranged that she was to come and spend the summer with Mrs. l'Estrange; and the latter expected her guest as soon as the invalid could be moved with safety. Arthur's mother had been much struck by the great refinement and charm of the girl, as well as by her extreme beauty. She hoped that Mrs. Friars would eventually consent to part with her niece, and that she might never be compelled to return to her uncongenial home. She had already become fond of her *protégée*. Miriam was loving and grateful; and the mother's heart had been more than half won when she discovered what a reverential and deep attachment this poor girl bore to her son. If any thing could have strength-



ened that feeling, it would have been the long hours of nursing and of most close companionship which followed upon her long and trying illness. The doctors, too, still shook their heads over their patient, whose dazzling complexion and lustrous eyes seemed to justify all their fears. They urged pure air, nourishing food, and, above all, cheerful society. Mrs. l'Estrange had only consented to leave her to get rooms ready for the invalid, and was to return to London to fetch her as soon as Miriam was strong enough to travel.

And summer came early this year, with a full burst of May—too hot for spring, almost too lovely to last—and with it came Miriam Lisle, looking dazzling and more graceful than ever, but still unmistakably fragile.

Mr. l'Estrange made up his mind he need be little at the cottage now his mother had got a companion who suited her so well, and who could be with her so constantly that he would be much less missed than usual. He had many pictures on hand, and he meant to work hard at them. The old yearning wish to be with Geraldine—to help and comfort her—took possession of his heart; and he knew from experience that only by work could he conquer that at times almost unbearable longing. But his intentions were not to be carried out. Whether the sudden heat was too much for Mrs. l'Estrange, or that she had over-exerted herself during her protracted stay in London, she certainly became far from well; and one sultry day early in June, when she seemed weaker than usual,

Miriam became alarmed, and sent an urgent summons to her son to come to her.

He found that the girl, although she still looked excessively delicate, had long ceased to be the invalid, and was a most devoted and really clever nurse to his suffering mother.

Mrs. l'Estrange, from having always been strong, thought herself more ill than she actually was, and believed that her end was not far off. Could she have looked into the future, she might have seen that she was destined to an extreme old age, and that she need not have hurried on the event which it now became the one great wish of her life to accomplish.

Arthur, always gentle and courteous to women, could not fail to be touched by the devotion with which the orphan girl tended his mother; and Mrs. l'Estrange was a diffident and fractious patient, as people who have had almost uninterrupted health during a long life are apt to be in illness. He saw the girl under a new and lovely guise—a guise under which a true woman is loveliest and shows her very best; and he could not but recognize that she had a sweet, unselfish, warmly grateful nature, unfailing tact, and a bright and ready intelligence, which, during his mother's long and tedious convalescence, was of infinite use and comfort to the invalid. But, as the old life flickered into vitality again, the young one seemed to droop and fade; and Arthur was obliged to urge on the girl all that the doctors had said at the time of her severe illness as to plenty of air and regular exercise.

She could hardly, in the immediate vicinity of Windsor, carry out these prescriptions by herself; and it scarcely needed his mother's entreaties to make Arthur see that, *faute de mieux*, he must be the companion of the beautiful Miriam's walks and rides. And so it came about that these two saw a good deal of each other.

I can imagine no place better suited to love-making than Windsor Forest, in its glorious, serene summer beauty. But although Arthur's artist eye had always found pleasure in the girl's marvellous beauty, his heart was full of the one woman who had absorbed it years ago, whom he loved, and would love always to the end of time. Geraldine, old and faded and wrinkled, would have been more to him than this fairest of God's creatures, in her radiant prime.

Few men are capable of constancy like this, without any hope of reward; but Arthur l'Estrange was one of these exceptions; and happy it is, I think, that they are rare. No other woman could ever touch his great heart. He had some of the elements of genius too in his composition, and genius is ever peculiar, proverbially humble too, and free from self-consciousness. And thus it never dawned upon him that the kind thoughtfulness he showed to his lovely companion, and which he would have shown to any woman under similar circumstances, was deepening day by day the passion which he had long ago inspired in the girl's warm and somewhat undisciplined nature.

No wonder she had come to love him. He had been kind to her always,

and respectful; which even a very young girl appreciates, especially from a man in every way her superior; and to her he was like a god; she adored him. But she was not deceived; she read his complete indifference in eye and voice and manner, and the hopelessness of her love was gradually and surely sapping the springs of her life. No physician could minister to a disease like this. It was killing her, and she knew it; and she was thankful that if this was to be the end, her last months on earth were such blissful ones, spent with him listening to his voice, with its haunting sweetness, reading the lines of the grand and now growingly-stern face; marking his rare smiles, his gentle courtesies, his entire devotion to even the caprices of his sick mother. She, if any one could, appreciated the painstaking thoughtfulness for others which marked all his actions, the combined humility and strength, which, in their rare union, made him so judicious a guide—so tender a friend.

But if Arthur was blind, his mother was not. She did not intend this young life to wither if she could help it. She believed that marriage would cure him; she saw that he was heart-sick; but she did not think that because he could not have the woman he loved, he should therefore not marry at all. And the more Mrs. l'Estrange saw of Miriam, the more she felt what a tender and devoted wife she would make to her son. She had a lighter nature, too, than his—a less sensitive and exacting one; and Mrs. l'Estrange believed in the force of contrasts, and

was more than ever bent on bringing these two together. A busy man, she argued, wanted a wife more than other men—some one to think for him, care for him, watch over him. She had practised such strict economy all her life, that Arthur would be very well off at her death; so she had no fears on the score of money; and for the rest she built many castles, in which her beautiful *protégée* figured as the heroine.

It is a very common idea, even among very good people—that a great love may be filled by a lesser one; and that if you cannot have the woman who is all in all to you, you had better take one to wife who may be something. I must own I think it a dangerous theory, and to try the experiment more dangerous still; but then I am a bachelor, and as such, perhaps, an incompetent judge.

Mrs. l'Estrange must have forgotten her own youth—forgotten that she had resisted every entreaty, every persuasion, turned a deaf ear to the father who doated upon her, and whom she adored; yet she had left him to make a marriage on which she had set her heart for ten years, and which he had as long and as obstinately opposed. Old people should remember that they were once young themselves.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

"But thou,  
If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul."

"I HAVE never written to you before and I hope you will forgive me

now. I cannot take a step like this without imploring you to advise me—and not only for now, but for the future: you know me so well, you can tell me what to do. My mother urges me, but I shrink from obeying her in this matter. I am no longer a very young man, and I know well what a loveless marriage means, especially to me. Geraldine, for once I must drop my mask, and tell you what you have probably guessed already. I have no love left to give to any woman. Colonel Trevelyan even is not wronged by this avowal. You know how I have held my peace for years; how I have never sought to see or meet you; how I have tried to prove a true friend, and not a false one. They say Miriam Lisle loves me; that I must marry her to save her life. I am not so vain as to believe this; but if *you* bid me, I will do it. I owe my mother much, and would make great sacrifices for her; she has set her heart on this marriage; the girl is true and tender, and has wound herself into my mother's life—shall I take her into mine? I tremble and am afraid; for I can never love her as a wife should be loved. Still, if you advise me to do it, I shall believe it to be right."

Geraldine's answer was short and like herself:

"I advise you to marry Miriam Lisle. I cannot say I wish it; but I think you will be doing right, and I pray God to bless you both. Let it be soon, for I cannot bear this long. She will not grudge my seeing you sometimes; and your mother, perhaps, will

come to me when it is over. My love to her.

"GERALDINE TREVELYAN."

She sent Miriam a wedding-present, a beautiful and costly one, which delighted the girl, and a very loving, tender letter.

The days went on. It was September when Geraldine first heard from Mr. l'Estrange on the subject of his marriage; it was late in November when the events I am about to chronicle took place.

At first that letter had comforted her: she knew she was beloved—he had said so; and for many weeks the knowledge was so sweet to think of—to know that she, and she alone, possessed his heart. She bore up well, and some of her old sunny joyousness came back to her. What did it signify who he married, or when, so long as he loved her? They would be more than ever to each other, when both were trying to live for duty, and for duty only; when to both a loveless life was before them, and nothing could alter it. In the old days she had often thought of his marrying, and fancied how desperately in love he would be, and how tender and chivalrous and romantic would be that devotion. What a fate was in store for the object of it! She did not wonder that he was to marry Miriam; his mother wished it, and the girl loved him. She shivered a little at this; but altogether I think that she was happier after that letter than she had been for years; and some weeks later she received another from him, in which he told her all his secret

—how she had been the ideal of his life from the first moment he beheld her; how her goodness, and her unselfishness, and her purity, had taught him many lessons; how, had they met earlier, it would have been the hope and happiness of his life to try and win her; how, as time went on, and he had seen her as a wife, he had learned to respect her more and more; how her influence had helped him through his life, had kept him from wrongdoing; how, having once given his whole heart into her keeping, he could never take back the gift, but the pure love had sanctified his life, and made holy to him the name of woman. He told her how he should never cease to love her, but as the angels are loved; and ended by praying God to bless her, to bless them both, to make them able to do their duty in this world, though happiness was denied them.

Geraldine treasured this letter even more than the former; and peace, for the first time since her ill-starred marriage, seemed to settle on her heart. She visited the tiny grave of her first-born, and wept with less bitterness than she had ever done since that sad time. She played with her sweet, beautiful little girl, and went singing about the old house with much of her early brightness.

This happy state of things had lasted some weeks, when one morning, at breakfast, Colonel Trevelyan flung down the paper with an expression strong even from his lips.

"I always thought the fellow a fool, but not such an ass as this—a man really well-born too. Lucky, poor

Doncaster has been dead these twenty years. He was a proud old fellow, and I believe it would have killed him. With such a name too! Miriam Lisle—a Jewess, of course.—Geraldine, did you know what a fool L'Estrange was going to make of himself?"

And, indulging in more coarse witticisms than I care to repeat, he fortunately did not wait for an answer; as at that moment they came to say his horse was waiting; and presently he left the room.

They were alone at Trevelyan; and as soon as the door closed upon her husband, Geraldine picked up the paper and read the announcement. Then, for the first time, she seemed to realize what had happened; that he was lost to her; that from henceforth they would become almost strangers to each other. She carried the paper upstairs, and went slowly to her boudoir—the room she had sat in when her child died. The day seemed interminable—and yet she never knew how it went; she locked her door, and did not even hear the servants when they came to tell her that luncheon was ready. Some hours later, they said the same thing about the tea, and Geraldine's maid came and asked to speak to her. Still she never moved.

At last her little girl came and battered at the door with her tiny baby-hands, and called, "Mamma, mamma!" piteously; but the mother neither heard nor heeded. She was in fact both deaf and blind—for the sunshine poured into the room; and if she thought about it at all, it struck her as the dreariest day her eyes had

ever lighted on. It is well for us that such moments cannot last, for they threaten to unhinge reason; and no doubt for the time we are not sane.

Fortunately for her, Colonel Trevelyan had ridden far to attend some petty sessions, and would not be home till evening; so she was left undisturbed. She sat on in blank despair; for the first time realizing all that Arthur L'Estrange had been to her. She was frightened at herself, and at the might of her own feelings. It was not so much sorrow that she felt as fury—fury; blind, impotent, wild despair gnawed at her heart.

How dare any woman be *his* wife? Why was she always to suffer, and others to be happy? She had, as we know, felt passionate indignation when her husband had so wronged her in the early days of their married life. She shuddered even now, when she thought of the curse he was bringing upon his own soul by his wickedness; she had prayed for him in abject self-abasement, and had even hated herself at times because she had forgiven him. It seemed to her pure soul as if she was contaminated by his sin; but God had helped her, and she had been a faithful and good wife, if not a loving one. And this was the end—this was the blow which was to crush her. She was to go through her life unloved always, and the man who had been her true and tender friend had formed for himself other ties. Might she even pray for him now? That was the agony, the crowning agony of all. She had a very gentle, very good, very unselfish nature, this poor woman of

whom I write; but she shuddered now at herself; she felt that her heart had depths which she had never fathomed. What had she expected? Did she think that Arthur was never to marry for her sake? that he was to disappoint and grieve his widowed mother, and live alone always, without children's voices and woman's love, because of her?—she who could never be any thing to him—she who was fettered by ties which at that moment seemed loathsome as they had never done before, unbearable, too hard. Then Satan whispered to her, why might they never have been any thing to each other? Why should both their lives be wasted for evermore, as they would be, as they were—for what? that she might respect the honor of a man who did not know what the word honor meant.

Gradually she recollected what had taken place—that he was married also; fettered as she was. Oh, why had he done it? she cried in anguish. Why had he put that invincible barrier between them? Was not life hard enough to her before? Was it not all she could do to bear it? And she had lost him as a friend. Even in her misery she could not be so wicked and ungenerous as to rob another woman of her husband. But she hated the woman who was his wife—and natures like hers are not given to hatred—and it was bitter to her, unspeakably bitter. There are no words in human language which can paint the suffering of that long and weary day.

As she grew calmer, she began to wonder what would they do, this man

and his wife, with love only on one side; and who could help loving Arthur l'Estrange? Was he not so good and so true, so tender too, that in time he also must love the beautiful, winning creature who was now his wife? Yes, he would love her, Geraldine felt sure, some day; not perhaps as he might have loved her. And oh the agony of that "might!" What did it not reveal to her! To have been loved like that—protected, shielded, helped through life—not as the plaything and the idol of an hour or a day, but the companion and friend of a lifetime, who would be dearer as years went on, even though they should endure for eternity. That was her idea of love. Vaguely she knew it was his also; and if he had really loved her like this, why had he left her to so sad a fate? why had she hardly seen him all the summer? why for years had she not even heard from him? Visions floated through her mind of what life with him would have been, in perhaps a foreign land with cloudless skies and glorious sunshine; a life in which he could have worked out some of his *beau-ideals*, and she would have helped him in her sweet womanly fashion, watching, and waiting, and loving, and praying, as so many women spend their lives, not expecting him to give up any thing for her, and yet ready to give up all if need be for him. She seemed to realize that an infinite beauty and an infinite holiness would have belonged to a union like this—a union which would be beautiful and holy to the end.

For the first time it came into her

head to wonder why she had married. At the time circumstances had been so strong that it seemed even to herself as if she was unable to offer any resistance. Now, as an older woman, she had acquired considerable decision of character, and she wished with all her heart that she had been more valiant in the past. What had tempted her to commit the sin of marrying without love? No wonder blessings had been far from her. She must have appeared to others what she hated most—a woman who had sold herself for money and position and the good things of this world. She began to think of herself as a criminal, who had met the punishment she deserved. She forgot that a girl in her teens is virtually as powerless to resist a marriage her parents have planned for her as if it was compulsory.

It was early morning when she entered the room; darkness had come on, and the fire had long been out, ere she fell on her knees; her lips moved, but no words would come; her brain seemed to be on fire; she repeated psalms and collects to herself in parrot-like fashion, trying to find some comfort, and hoping she was not going mad; but in vain. At last, mechanically she rang for her maid, who told her it was already seven o'clock, and feared she had had a bad headache.

Geraldine allowed her to think so; and when soon afterward the bell rang, she dressed as usual and went down to dinner.

The servants always stayed in the room, even when they were alone; so a few commonplaces served for conver-

sation, and after dinner Colonel Trevelyan fell asleep.

Geraldine never knew how she got through the night. Sometimes she thought and hoped she was going to die, but alas! death comes not to those who woo it most. At last, quite worn out, she sank into one of those heavy, dreamless sleeps which so often follow upon prolonged and agonizing mental excitement. Then came the terrible waking; the dim sense of pain; the unbelief; the wild hope it may have been all a dream; and the dull, heavy, no longer acute agony which the poor sufferer is often to bear through life—the consciousness of a loss which nothing is ever to fill up on this side the grave.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

Pray only that thine aching heart  
From visions vain content to part;  
Strong for love's sake its woe to hide,  
May cheerful wait the cross beside."

It was Sunday, and Geraldine went alone to church as usual. She had intended to stay for the sacrament, but she felt too wicked. She had reached, I think, the crowning acme of misery, for she had begun to doubt every thing—to call God cruel, and herself irreclaimable. To a nature originally so good, so sweet, and so sunny, it was positive agony to realize the change in herself, to become conscious that the best of us are liable to reap the whirlwind, if we allow our own passions to obtain the mastery over us.

And think, my readers, what this woman had gone through before she came to this. Judge her kindly, and

pity her deeply, but condemn her not. "Her sins, which were many, are forgiven; for she loved much," are our Saviour's words. God had saved her from sin and from herself; but at that moment, alas! the poor human nature was asserting itself, and she was not grateful. She craved wildly for happiness—happiness at any price. Who among us can say at once, from the heart, "Thy will be done," when God takes away the desire of our heart, the light of our eyes, and leaves us in darkness and alone?

Just before the sermon, they sang that beautiful hymn—

"Art thou weary? art thou languid?  
Art thou sore distrest?  
Come to Me, saith One; and coming,  
Be at rest."

Geraldine felt turned to stone. It was well for happy people to sing like this; well for the old, who had not a long life before them without love, who were sinking peacefully into their graves, having seen their children and their children's children grow up round them; who had fought life's battles and conquered; had been loved, and had loved in their turn. She began vaguely to wonder whether it was not all a fable; whether Jesus had really lived, and felt, and suffered, and walked upon this earth without sin. Why, if He had been so tender to the trials and sorrows of humanity, had He permitted them to live at all? why had He healed the sick, restored the son to his widowed mother, Lazarus to his sorrowing sisters? Surely there was more cruelty than mercy in giving back life, which might be so miserable, which in

so many cases was disgraced by sin, or unbearable from suffering. What was the use of creating people only to suffer? was not life too hard, and death to be dreaded, even when most you welcomed it?

27th Psalm, 5th verse, Prayer-Book version: "For in time of trouble He shall hide me in His Tabernacle; yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone."

This was the text. Geraldine had not yet unlearned the simple habits of her girlhood, and she carefully looked out the verse in her Church-service, keeping her finger on the words; her heart, I fear, little interested in their sense or meaning. But the preacher, though young, was eloquent; and by-and-by, as he began to apply his subject to those who that day were in trouble, and who heard the inspired words of the Psalmist with a fresh meaning attached to them, Geraldine raised her drooping head, and listened as she had not done since Mr. Austen spoke from the pulpit at Oldcourt.

The preacher began by what sounded dry at first—the history of the Tabernacle, when Moses received the Divine commands concerning it. Its construction given with marvellous minuteness, the protection it afforded, the extraordinary sanctity with which it was invested, and the strict observances connected with all forms of worship in its hallowed precincts, were probably made so severely outward to suit the semi-barbarous state of the epoch—or not semi, for it was wholly barbarous—and the stubborn and rebel-



lions nature of the people to whom God spoke in language so terrible, and visited with punishments so unsparing.

The clergyman spoke of the cloud which rested upon the Tabernacle—"for the cloud of the Lord was upon the Tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys" (40th chapter of Exodus, verse 38); a holy and anointed guide to the Israelites in their long wanderings—ever present to their sight in their journeys—by night terrible in fire, by day shadowed in a cloud. And when he had amplified at some length upon this, he said: "Are there any here in trouble, unknown to themselves almost, not actually in sorrow? There may be hearts here, which, like the Israelites, refuse to acknowledge and obey a protecting and all-righteous God. Then to them the text speaks. You all of you from childhood, on reading the history in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, have more or less blamed these children of Israel; you have wondered at their ingratitude and unbelief; have sighed over their hardness of heart, their want of spirituality in clinging so tenaciously to the pleasures of life, and to its baser enjoyments; their secret murmurs, their open rebellion because the food was manna instead of flesh, because water did not flow to meet them at every halting-place, because they found the way long, and the hardships of the road great.

"Have you thought, at the same time, why this history was given to us in its minute, at times almost wear-

some details? Have you made any allowance when you have been most inclined to blame them, and remembered that they had not the advantages which we enjoy—Christianity; that is to say, the Doctrine of the Cross—the law of self-sacrifice had not come to them? They had lived little better than slaves in a heathen country, where the laws were lax, and the king an oppressor. Those who have been tyrannized over are proverbially, when their turn comes, tyrants; and liberty came to these chosen people too suddenly and too violently for them to make a good use of it; they did not like their bondage to Egypt, but they had grown to a certain extent used to the yoke, and the miracles which freed them fell upon hearts incapable of understanding, still less of appreciating their wondrous deliverance. Dare we hope that under like temptations we should not have succumbed also? Let us try and put ourselves in their place, as far as may be. We can imagine we are travelling through a wilderness—this world is that to many, and the Canaan of the Israelite is promised to all. We find the way long, the rough places are too rough for us; the dangers which beset us are many, the privations great. When we were younger it was not so; our responsibilities were not so many, our duties seemed easier, clearer, plainer; we had fewer cares, more enticing pleasures; and we sigh for the Egypt we have left.

"Brethren, in this world we were never meant to pause, to stagnate, and to enjoy only. There is work for all; no time to regret or to look back.

We must press onward as the Israelites did to that promised land; and, unlike them, we must not despond when dangers meet us; difficulties must not overwhelm us, they must only incite us to fresh and more vigorous effort; our lives must each, one and all, be lived out as God pleases, not as we please, and He demands our obedience as entirely as when He said to the Jews: 'Behold, I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him' (Exodus xxiii. 20.)

"He speaks to us, if we would but listen, in language quite as unmistakable. He loves us, but only when our wills are merged in His divine will. Perhaps that will is exercised differently for all, but to the same end, and most often utterly unlike what we should wish for ourselves. The poor fancy money makes happiness, the rich often sigh for the health no money can buy for them; the busy man longs for leisure, and the idle man for work; the old would be young, and the young pine for the experience of age. We condemn the discontent of this half-educated people, when, in the nineteenth century, we are bartering our souls for the flesh-pots of Egypt as madly as they did. We are, if not in open rebellion, repining against God's decrees; praying for sunshine when He judges it best for us to be in shadow; entreating for plenty when penury must be our portion; in brief, craving

for two heavens, one here, another hereafter—exactly as the Jews murmured and rebelled because they did not reach the Canaan of their dreams at once. We are only too like them; for we will not understand or make much of the period of probation which God in His all-wise providence has ordered for us, as He did for the Israelites—a probation prepared for us in love, and the only means by which we can hope to be fitted for the home and the happiness which are to be ours when our travel is ended and our haven reached. On a journey, which most of us have some experience of, are we not willing to put up with some inconveniences, privations, and fatigues? Do we not make up our minds to dispense with some of our usual comforts and luxuries? Do we dwell most upon the pains and penalties of travelling, or upon the new scenes through which we are passing; or if all be familiar, and there is no novelty to awaken our interest, do we not fix our thoughts on the place or the country whither we are going, and make many pleasant pictures in our mind's-eye if it be our home, build castles innumerable if it is a strange land to which we are journeying? Now we are all travelling, and God does not wish it to be to a strange land. He has told us a great deal about it, that it may be familiar to us. He sent His Son from heaven to bring us thither. He allowed our Saviour to live our life here, to realize all its pains, its disappointments, its privations—worst of all, its bitter unrest; for did He not say: 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests;

but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.'

"He realized its burden of sin—He realized it in anguished recoil and giant victory; and that we may be victorious likewise, He enjoins us to carry heaven in our hearts here, to make it our own now, at once, and forever; that in all circumstances, under all climes, in poverty or wealth, when youth and joy are ours, or when old age and sorrow come to try us, it may belong to us. 'Bought with a price,' He gives it to us; a passport to that better land—a full and free forgiveness of our past faults and follies. All He asks is, that we should trust Him, and believe in Him. 'Can you drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' was His answer to those who asked to sit on His right hand and on His left hand in His kingdom.

"Brother man! are you in trouble? Has that time come to you? Then all I can say is, if it is too hard to bear, it is because you are fighting with God. You will not see that hovering cloud which rests upon the tabernacle; you will not hear the gracious invitation to 'hide yourself therein.' You are trying to bear your sorrow alone, and you wonder that it crushes you; or perhaps you turn to the sympathy of friends, and find it cold, and without understanding. You try them first, and God last.

"In this again are we not like the Israelites? They only came to God when every thing else failed; when their punishments were too hard to

bear, and terror had subdued their will. Is this the worship you would like to give to Him? Is this cold, calculating fear the best homage our hearts can pay to the God who made us, the Saviour who redeemed us? If you are in trouble, come to Him. Happier for you if you have lived with Him in joy, and feel He is your familiar friend, your daily strength and counselor; One who 'sticketh closer than a brother;' One whose name is Love, and whose most emphatic command to His followers is, 'Love one another, as I have loved you.'

"Then in sorrow you will not be a stranger begging for admission to that tabernacle; you will have known its secrets long, and trusted to its help. Your 'lamp trimmed and burning,' you will 'enter with joy into the presence of your Lord.'

"And what is this added to the promise? 'In the *secret* place of His dwelling shall He hide me.' What do you understand by this? Does it convey any special meaning to your souls? It has one; and to God's tried servants that meaning becomes most clear when they are most afflicted. Whether the anguish be of body or of soul, or of both, it can be lightened, if not healed, when we become acquainted with the mysterious blessedness of that secret place, especially when we are *hidden* in it—hidden by God from the strife of tongues, from the war of this world, from the jars of earth; uplifted even in our suffering to get a glimpse of heaven.

"Who among you has been afflicted, and at some portion of his life has

not realized this? We belong most to God when we are most pitied by men. We are partakers of Christ's sufferings, and we 'enter dimly into the glory which shall be revealed.'

"Ask any humble, tried Christian what his experience of pain has been. Friends have been near us, and around us, and yet far off; relations more tender and compassionate they could not be; and yet we have gone gladly into that tabernacle alone. We have 'hidden ourselves in the secret place,' and have left them outside.

"God reveals His secrets to us only when we are alone with Him there; and we put off our shoes and the taint of our travel-stained earthiness from us, and feel we are upon holy ground. Then we recognize our blessedness. Would we wish our worst ills had been less to bear, and that we had never seen those hidden mysteries? Heart and flesh fail us ere we cross the threshold; but once there we say, 'Not my will, but Thine, be done.' And once we have known that dwelling, shall we return to earth again as we went in? Has not God's Spirit rested on us? Has He not unfolded to us some of His deep secrets? Have we not, above all, learned that His will is love, and that only in that love can we find peace?

"'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' How? Made happy? Given back their beloved from the dead? Saved from the fate they dreaded? Endowed with that they long for? Was this the way God taught the Israelites of old? Yes; sometimes He gave them their

desire, and it turned to ashes in their lips.

"He does not deal so with us who have the Christian dispensation for our guide, Christ for our example. He says, 'He that will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.' Take it up; don't ask others to carry it for you—they have enough to do to bear their own.

"Don't wait till it is put upon you, but take it up now and follow Christ—follow Him through sunshine and through storm, through evil report and good report, through weal and woe, fighting under His banner until death comes to ease us of our burdens, and we sleep in Jesus.

"They who enter into the secret place of His Tabernacle fear not even death; it becomes to them a rest from their labors, a familiar thought, not a dread foreboding. 'He died, and rose again.' 'They know that His saying is true;' and if life is to be their portion, they go forth to meet it bravely, strong in the strength which they bear with them from that inner place: for, read to the end of the text, 'And set me up upon a rock of stone'—immovable, unchangeable forever. His 'rock is made of stone,' and cannot break or fail. Trust in it, then, and believe that whatever your trouble, God can make you able to bear it and give you strength to meet it. That He will do so, you know. How soon must rest with yourselves. His ear is always open to your prayers, and the eternal light is burning night and day before His throne. Dare you enter in? Your way will be lonely, your

path steep, your difficulties wellnigh insurmountable, your failures more than you can count, your pain too great for human endurance; but your sweat has never turned to blood upon your forehead as His did—He who had never sinned. Can you not endure something for Him? Come *to-day* to His table and try. ‘Eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,’ and try to enter into the life which was led for you and for me—the only life which was ever led on earth without one thought of self in it. And ‘the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be among you and remain with you always.’ Amen.”

Geraldine fell on her knees, and prayed then, and during the solemn service which followed, as she had never prayed before. In after-years how she thanked God for the peace of that day, and that her heart had been melted and turned to Him, that all bitterness and anger had gone out of it, and that only peace and love were there—the love which is not of this earth, and which strives faintly to imitate His love who gave us all!

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## CHAPTER XX.

“Then in life’s goblet freely press  
The leaves that give it bitterness,  
Nor prize the colored waters less;  
For in thy darkness and distress  
New light and strength they give.”

A WEEK went by—a week unbroken by any excitement, almost by any in-

terest. The hunting-season had begun in earnest, and Geraldine saw little of her husband; but she fancied, when she did, that there was a shade more kindness in his manner to her, and that sometimes, in the evenings, he watched her, with a puzzled and pitying expression on his face. That he was more gentle and considerate, there could not be a doubt; and he found time occasionally to caress the beautiful little being who had committed the sad mistake, in his eyes, of being a girl instead of a boy.

Geraldine fetched the child from the nursery every morning as soon as breakfast was over and Colonel Trevelyan had departed for the day, and kept her with her as long as she was permitted by the nursery authorities to have her. She dreaded being alone. The peace which had raised her above earth and its jars on that Sunday morning we have described, had not lasted: it never does; it never can, as long as we remain in the flesh. Grief has many phases; and just now it took with her the form of a dull, heavy pain, which never left her either sleeping or waking, and which was almost like physical torture. She wondered what had happened to her when first she opened her eyes in the morning. She lay down at night with an intolerable aching sense of unrest—an aching which seemed to affect her body as well as her mind, and wellnigh wore her out. She tried to work; she read for hours, without remembering what the book was about or feeling the least interest in it—or, indeed, in any thing. She put her drawing quite

away, and never even looked at it. Her life seemed suddenly to stand still. All this time she had only cried once, and that was when the child fell and hurt itself, and the poor little thing stopped its own weeping to look with pathetic wonder at mamma, and stroke the soft cheeks, which had become visibly thinner and whiter in the last few days. The little Geraldine was, no doubt, her best help and comfort through these weary hours. No loving, unselfish woman's heart can be sad always when a child is present; and the mother found herself laughing sometimes; and as she carried the little creature about with her, or chased her in the long conservatory, the shadow would leave her face, and the baby-smiles were reflected in the woman, who felt as if she should never smile again, and yet who had barely lived a quarter of the time allotted to us in this world.

Sometimes she forgot what had happened, and wondered he did not come: he had been there so many autumns, it did not seem Trevelyan without him. She avoided the picture-gallery, and never trusted herself to sing now. Who was there to care what she did?

Sometimes she passed hours on her knees; at others even prayer seemed denied to her. She loathed herself for this. But who that has suffered intensely has not felt at times that they will fight by themselves, fight to the death—that they will not be conquered or yield—though for the moment they refuse the weapons which

God gives to all, which Christ puts into our hands and bids us use?

At other times she caught herself watching for letters—waking with the hope that one would come that morning. She did not the least realize what she expected him to say, or why she thought he would write. She wondered if he suffered as she did, and whether he would ever tell her so. Then she recoiled from herself in horror, and spent hours in abject self-abasement. Had she grown wicked, cruel, unwomanly, that she could wish Arthur to be unhappy, his wife to be neglected and unloved as she had been—to look for happiness and sympathy in her home, as all true women must, and not find it—to be disappointed always—to live with an aching void in her heart—as she had lived for years?

After this she forced herself to pray for them both; and those names we bring with us to God's footstool must become dear to us; so, in time, she hoped she should be able to give a sister's love to the woman who called Arthur l'Estrange husband; the woman who seemed to her blessed indeed, blessed above the common lot of humanity, and over whom a halo had already fallen; for was she not *his* wife—protected by him, belonging to him, loved by him? She moaned aloud at this. But she could not weep; tears never come to eyes which ache and scorch as hers did. The struggle was beginning to tell upon her, and even her husband perceived the change, when one evening, as she sat under the full blaze of a lamp, he watched

her doing some fine work for the baby, and marked the drooping of the mouth which had been like a rose-bud, and had laughed all over, not so long ago either, in sunny sweetness. She raised her eyes, and tried to smile when he spoke to her, but the smile faded immediately into blank weariness sadder than any weeping.

Not many days later she had need of all her courage, all her self-control. Colonel Trevelyan had gone out hunting as usual, and was brought home.

They tried to break it to her gently; but how can you soften or tell well such tidings as these?

The master of hounds, an old friend of her husband's, had ridden at once to the station, and telegraphed for the London surgeons, and their own doctor had reached Trevelyan even before his patient. He took a sanguine view of the case; but the other men saw directly what had happened.

Geraldine was at first almost too stunned to take in what they meant. She listened, but hardly comprehended.

Colonel Trevelyan had had the most perfect health; with the exception of an occasional trifling indisposition, and one slight accident, she had never seen him ill during all the years they had been married.

Now, without any warning, this had come. An accident is always terrible and startling, and in such a case as this, how unspeakably awful!

The long day was ended, and the

night had come—come as it must to end the longest and dreariest day. The doctors have done all that is possible—to alleviate the anguish was the only thing left for them—they have said all they have to say, and have at last retired into the room adjoining that where their patient lies.

So Geraldine keeps her mournful vigil alone. She has been told that he will never awake again to full consciousness—never even know her before he dies.

She gazes on the beautiful sculptured face, rigid but still beautiful, and thinks over their married life. So many years of married life without love! She almost wishes that it might begin over again, with the experience she has gained as an older woman; she fancies matters might have been different, had they started better; forgetting that seventeen is too early an age for one to take all the responsibility and do all the guiding both in principle and religion.

It was a sad mental review, and she shuddered as she recollected all she had suffered, and how weary she had often felt of a thralldom which was soon to cease forever. No good woman can come into contact with death under such circumstances and not grieve. Keenly and deeply Geraldine was grieving, and through it all there ran the sad under-current of what a separated false life it had been to both. Had she loved him, would it have been different?—that was the burden of her cry. Perhaps she had not tried enough. Did it please God to spare his life now, she felt that nothing

should be wanting on her part—no effort would be too great, no conquest of herself too hard. She would make him love her, and she would make him happy.

The doctors, to soften the blow to her, had at first told her he would be a cripple for life. Doctors were not infallible; perhaps they did not know; God only could tell. But if this was to be his fate, how she would endeavor to make it a bearable one to him! Nothing would seem too much to give up for his sake. She would nurse and tend and comfort him. And perhaps some day he might be led to see why he had been thus afflicted. It might be the means of bringing him to God, and of joining them in that best of all communions on earth—the belief in a common Saviour, the fellowship of suffering, and the supreme hope, without which none would be able to bear it, of the heaven promised to all.

As she sat there in that great silence, her thoughts wandered away from the present, and she wondered over her first coming home, already an unloved wife; not a year married, yet no longer beloved; still honored though, and treated with great kindness and courtesy; then of the time of open neglect; then the death of her two boys one after the other, followed by her own apathy to every thing, until the anguished despair of the last few days had taught her that there were bitterer drops in her cup than she had yet tasted.

And now this great blow had come, and woke her suddenly to feel that she might soon be alone in the world

with her two little children, and that the companionship and protection of years to which no gentle woman is indifferent was even then being severed.

Colonel Trevelyan in his worst moments had remembered the respect due to his wife; he had softened to her too in a measure when their children had died, though he pitied himself infinitely the most, as it took from him the only excuse for his marriage.

The clock struck three, and Geraldine started nervously. The rustle of her dress roused the sick man; he moved uneasily and groaned—his lips moved. His unhappy wife bent down to listen. It was the old story, which had turned her sick so often, and which he constantly repeated whenever he slept restlessly.

"I could not help it; take her away; don't say I did it! She is wet and cold; I never put her there. I provided amply for her and the boy. Curse the woman! why do you stand looking at me like that? We shall have a crowd soon." Then changing his tone to one of intense tenderness, he said quite loud and distinctly: "Lucy, my love, my angel! No one was ever half so fair; and that voice, I should know it among ten thousand. The touch of your hand, my darling, is heaven to me; the music of your voice is sweeter than aught else. You say I shall tire of you, and grow cold; try me. I know you love me! We will walk in life's fair paths together hand in hand forever!"

Toward morning he became quieter, and at last he slept. The doctors crept in and looked at him, and shook their



heads; for that sleep, they thought, would have no waking. It was restless, and dreadful enough to see; and they tried to persuade Geraldine to leave the room; but she refused positively, and begged, unless it was absolutely necessary for them to remain, that they would leave her alone with her husband.

Then she threw herself on her knees, and prayed for him—prayed with a passion and an earnestness which, alas, our prayers too often want!—prayed that his life might be spared, and hers taken; or, if this could not be, that God would forgive him his many sins; that mercy might be shown him; that this awfully sudden death might end his punishment.

No wife who had adored her husband could have prayed more fervently than this poor young creature, whose life he had wrecked, whose youth he had blighted. She prayed for herself too, that she might be forgiven. With anguish unspeakable she recalled her brief rebellion, and thanked God for the peace which had followed it.

But though her grief was great, the agony of the days she so contritely remembered could never come again. Thank God; there are limits to human pain! and that once you have known the passion of despair, though you may grieve, and grieve deeply, you have to a certain extent exhausted suffering, and will never again experience that which is quite unendurable.

She thought over the days that were gone and would never come back. Only yesterday, in the morning, though it already seemed a century ago, Colo-

nel Trevelyan had kissed his little girl more fondly than usual, and had spoken to his wife with much kindness.

Trifles too came crowding into her mind, as in supreme moments they will: little things, forgotten, long since buried, she had hoped—things which had seemed hard enough to bear at the time; with which she had fought battles and conquered—came to torment her with their memories now. Every feeling, every trial of her life, all its unspoken difficulties, seemed to crowd into her surging brain. But she prayed on, until the daylight streamed into the sick-room.

And dare we say her prayers were not heard?—that it was too late? Is it ever too late with God?

The dying man's hand strayed over her bowed head for a moment. She rose quickly to her feet and bent over him. In accents gasping, but still clear and distinct, to her eager ear came her own name; the one word "forgive," followed by that blessed one which is associated with all pardon—"Jesus!"

A little later he again struggled to say something, and, fixing his eyes full upon her, he faintly murmured, "Pray!" And Geraldine did pray. She prayed, as if she were inspired, every petition that could suit that bitter hour and her own aching heart; and as she concluded, with that most beautiful prayer from the Visitation of the Sick: "Deliver him from fear of the enemy, and lift up the light of Thy countenance upon him and give him peace, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ," she felt certain her

own "Amen!" was feebly repeated by the voice she had hardly dared to hope she would hear again in this world.

Then an ashy paleness came over his face; a paleness which poor Geraldine had seen too often and knew too well. With a suppressed cry she summoned the doctors; and almost ere they reached her she fell to the ground, nearly as lifeless and inanimate as the corpse which was all that now remained of the admired, the rich, and the prosperous Colonel Trevelyan.

Geraldine had two children living at the time of her husband's death. The eldest died, as has already been told at the commencement of this story. The youngest lived to grow up very lovely, with the sweet and touching grace of her mother, and some of the superb beauty of Colonel Trevelyan.

She inherited all the portion set aside for younger children, and made a marriage which rejoiced her guardian Lady St. Clair's heart. In her first season she captivated the eyes and won the affections of Lord d'Eyncourt, heir-apparent to a dukedom, and, moreover, a man young, clever, good, and attractive.

Her mother's sad story is not likely to be repeated in the child.

Geraldine survived her husband many years, and her memory is most tenderly cherished by the daughter whose good angel she had been.

She was still young and lovely when her husband died, and she had more than one opportunity of making a brilliant marriage, had she been so

inclined; but it soon became apparent to her suitors that she was heart and soul engrossed by the care and education of the little Sibyl.

The mother and child were hardly ever seen apart, and Geraldine gave up society altogether, that she might devote herself entirely to her little daughter.

The poor knew her well, and to the sick and the sorrowful she seemed an angel visitant. Blessings should not be far from her, had all their prayers been heard.

The only relaxation she gave herself, from a life of duty and of active exertion for others, was her drawing. Every summer she made a sketching expedition; and in the prettiest parts of England, Scotland, and Wales, the fair Madonna-faced woman, still young, but too worn to be lovely, accompanied always by a most beautiful, radiant, dark child, excited the curiosity of tourists and of others who saw them.

She and Mr. l'Estrange never met again in this life. They both judged it best that it should be so.

Geraldine had been fading for years; but there seemed to be no definite disease. The early troubles of her life had probably wasted it; but I doubt whether, under the happiest auspices, she would have been a long-lived woman. Natures tuned so high are apt to snap suddenly; and she had none of the hardness or the dulness required to meet trials like hers.

Mrs. l'Estrange was the only friend with whom she kept up any thing like intimacy, and she was with her when

she died. It was very sudden at the last—that gradual fading so often is.

Mrs. l'Estrange had meant to ask Arthur to come and see her. But it was not to be. The last time he saw the face of the woman he had so passionately and nobly loved was with the seal of death upon it, and the smile of triumph on her lips which brought back some of its youth and beauty to the worn and marble face.

He kissed her then for the first and last time; and even his mother did not stay to see the agony which shook the strong man, as he thought of both their wasted lives, and of the suffering which it had never been the privilege and blessing of his life to lighten.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur l'Estrange are said to be a very happy couple. He is devoted to his art—so devoted, that that is the only grievance his wife can find in what seems an exceptionally happy lot.

He hardly ever goes with her into the gay world, in which she so much delights, and of which she is so great an ornament. Her beauty created quite a *fureur* at first, and she is still courted and made much of in very exclusive circles. She is so entirely wrapped up in her husband, that the most conceited of aspirants cannot get up more than a mild and utterly harmless flirtation with her.

They have two children, a boy and a girl. The boy is beautiful like his mother, and idolized by her. The pale, fairy little girl Mrs. l'Estrange calls plain; but to her father she is every thing. And sometimes when they are alone together, and his lips are pressed against hers, I fancy he is thinking of another pale face which has already put on immortality.

"And the stately ships go on  
To their haven under the hill:  
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!"

THE END.

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